

Supplement to December Bulletin  
**First District Normal School**  
Kirksville, Missouri

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Vol. X

DECEMBER, 1910

No. 3

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Published by the First District Normal School. Issued Quarterly  
June, September, December, March.

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Entered June 25, 1902, at Kirksville, Mo., as second-class matter under  
Act of Congress of July, 1894.

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**FUNCTION OF THE NORMAL SCHOOL.**

Address by President John R. Kirk, State Normal School, Kirksville, Mo., delivered before the Southern Educational Association, Chattanooga, Tenn., December 28, 1910.

The Normal Schools are in the limelight without their own seeking. But they ought not to flinch. The good ones can stand the glare. The bad ones need it. Some normal schools have long been leaders in educational agitations and enthusiasms. Some stand for stolid conservatism, content in copying devices and processes called "methods", willing to mark time or at best to exhaust their energies drilling and "training" prospective teachers in specific ways of doing things as others have done them.

Efficient present day normal schools can not be molded from one pattern or from many patterns or from any preconceptions. Some essential conventionalities, such as spelling, arithmetic and grammar approach uniformity. These conventionalities may be treated somewhat uniformly everywhere. But the fundamental needs in education differ as communities differ. The thought content of instruction and the teachers who give it must differ accordingly. Hence the normal schools that produce the teachers should be of many types. They are bound always to be on the look out for new and changing conditions. They can never safely become static.

Some normal schools seem quite ab-normal. Some teachers colleges are of very low grade. One normal school has academic and professional courses extending three or four years in advance of the nearest teachers college. Meanwhile adjustments and re-adjustments take place in view of varying community needs. No standardization can ever be allowed to become permanent. Well may the curriculum be in a measure like the railroad ticket, for a certain day and train only.

Should the normal school be wholly pedagogic or partly pedagogic and partly academic? Experienced and efficient normal school men agree that the normal school must be both academic and pedagogic. Those without recent experience and demonstrated efficiency are not competent judges, though some of them talk much. Some normal schools drill and train high school graduates one or two years in prescribed processes and then mark their quick meal products as "professional teachers." Such shortcut professional teachers are as a rule followers of well-beaten paths, called "methods." They are usually mechanical and seldom or never inspirational. They are much given to specific rules and devices. They seldom have large ingenuity or creative ideality. They seem never to have seriously modified education anywhere. They are like the tailor's product, made to fit.

The immaturity of students in the best high schools leaves them at graduation without the grasp and assimilation of elementary and high school studies that a teacher is obliged to have. Hence the necessity of rebuilding the academic foundations in the normal school is unavoidable. Arithmetical problems and all problems must be re-analyzed from the view point of the mature person.

Professional subjects, such as educational psychology, principles of education, school economy, school administration, school supervision, general methods and special meth-

ods, are themselves not in very good pedagogical form. They constitute poorly organized courses. They are in transition stages and only approaching organized form. They afford but poor means of developing mental virility, power of concentration and self-expression, such as the academic subjects afford.

The best normal schools have their students devote about two-thirds of the time to academic subjects and about one-third of their time to pedagogic subjects. Mere "training" in the forms and doctrines of pedagogics and in supervised practice produces, as a rule, only superficiality, unless intermixed with organized academic studies.

Indeed, "training" in any form is not the chief feature in producing teachers. "Training" is a term much overworked. The older, stronger masters in our profession did not use it as it is now used. The dog and pony show exemplifies "training" in its highest efficiency. Men and women need more than training. The prospective teacher needs some training and some drilling, but he needs education far more. He needs mental awakening, power of initiative, mental concentration, adaptability, inquisitiveness, taste for study, the power of cogitation and of reflection and introspection. Most of all, the prospective teacher needs that constructive ideality which is acquired and developed through eager and intense pursuit of the organized subjects in academic education.

Should the normal school or college for teachers be of high school rank or of college rank or of both, or should it continue with indefinite courses, showing no differentiation between studies of one rank and those of another? The answer ought to be easy enough. Everywhere entrance to normal schools approaches high school graduation, but the high school graduate is compelled to have his academic foundations rebuilt. Shall he re-hash and review in nauseating tediousness the texts and the subjects that he had

in the grades and the high school, or shall he enjoy the exhilaration of attacking subject matter with the freshness and the vigor of a recognized college student?

Those who have experimented in both phases of the issue have but one answer to give. The prospective teacher while preparing to be a teacher deserves every mental stimulus which can be made available, such as history and literature and other studies from the college view point. How much better to stir and stimulate the hopeful young prospective teacher with something which strikes him as new and fresh and worth while. Let those who can not be convinced by their reason visit for a time the slow-going, imitative normal school, and then step into one which typifies the higher ideals.

The conservative pattern following normal schools are over-effeminized. Only the aggressive constructive normal schools of college rank can retain the young men among their students. But all agree that some men are needed in school education. Hence we need some normal schools of the type that will develop some of our young men into teachers side by side with the young women.

Perhaps some would say: Keep out of the sacred sphere of the college and university. But what American will concede to any institution a monopoly of any form of education? Who wants a university-college trust organized? What broad-gauge university man wants it? What normal school man ever hesitated to encourage the university to organize its school of education, covering all phases of education from the very highest to the lowest? Some university men worry about this question. But why should they worry?

Some years ago a creed secured recognition to the effect that the high school teacher should be a fully educated person such as a university graduate is supposed to be, while the teachers up to and including the last day before entering the high school might be any kind of nondescripts,

or at best but half educated persons, such as some normal school graduates are. But conditions change. That doctrine is now indefensible. It is manifestly unsound. For if any person with brief and narrow preparation can be endured as a teacher it is evidently the teacher of mathematics or of a foreign language in a secondary school or college.

The reason is that those subjects have been organized and reorganized until they are quite commonly in good pedagogical form, and the one-sided person even of imitative or recitative attitude of mind and knowing little else can teach mathematics or Latin pretty well if he studied the subject under a pretty good teacher. But if any teacher in the world needs the incisive scholarship, the keen mindedness and versatility implied by the equivalent of a college education it is evidently the teacher in the middle and grammar grades of the elementary school. That is the person who must know many subjects well and who must try to start many children in many subjects on sound foundations.

A half dozen years ago Dr. Wm. T. Harris told us in the council of the N. E. A. that every elementary school should have somewhere in the intermediate grades at least one person of abundant scholarship, so as to become and be a nucleus around which others would gather for inspiration and leadership. Now we go further. We believe that all the teachers in the grades and in the rural schools should be as carefully and extensively and definitely educated and prepared as any of the teachers in the high school should be. But such preparation can not be secured in effeminized normal schools and teachers' colleges that offer short cuts to professional life.

It is only a short time since many university men were upbraiding the normal school for debauching education by sending out graduates with inadequate scholarship. Some of the good-hearted, old-fashioned college men took special pains to ridicule the normal school products on account of

their defective scholarship. Now some of these men are worrying for fear that the normal school will produce teachers too well prepared. Hence these gentlemen wish the normal schools to restrict themselves to a maximum of two years' "training" above high school graduation.

It might be well to inquire what the short cut normal school graduate with his brief course in devices and "methods" has done for education. Has such an individual anywhere taken noticeable leadership in the material improvement or reorganization of education? Let those answer affirmatively who are lacking in caution and in regard for the truth.

Last summer at Boston the Normal School Department of the N. E. A., representing normal schools of all the states, voted unanimously that the Normal School Diploma as a teacher's introduction to professional life, should not be issued to persons having preparation extending less than four years above the accredited high school course. There is nothing visionary about this. Some normal schools now refuse to issue a diploma for less than three years above high school graduation, while some require four years above high school graduation for a degree, and many of them have courses paralleling the requirements in the schools of education of the universities.

The reasons for these exacting requirements have long been clear and now gain strength each year. The high schools are changing and improving. The good colleges are getting out of the way of the high schools. The elementary schools have improved in many ways. Universities have doubled their requirements and quadrupled their facilities and grown much in public estimation.

Now in the general uplift should the normal schools be the only ones to remain at a standstill? Should they be static or dynamic? Should they imitate, copy and reiterate, or should they be constructive, creative and energizing forces? There is only one answer to give. Efficient normal

school men vote as a unit to have the equivalent of a college education for every person who is to be marked with the stamp of "professional teacher." Everywhere now the library, as never in the past, stirs and stimulates young life in the schools. Children enter the high school with knowledge of history, literature and art, which the early college could scarcely offer. Scientific appliances of endless variety challenge young life into multiform activities. The high school freshmen learn, comprehend and use literature, history and science once difficult or impossible to the college freshman. Who is so dense of intellect as not to know this?

Many high schools have better facilities than standard colleges enjoyed twenty years ago. But the normal schools have been positive and effective forces in producing the change. Then certainly they should not now suffer arbitrary arrest of development or be marooned or compressed by stratification.

But some would establish caste in American education by standardizing and classifying our institutions after the manner of European countries. Nothing could be worse for American education. Any approach to caste retards, obstructs and damages education. Any wide-spread scheme of classifying prospective teachers at the time of their graduation from the high school means caste. Some think the high school graduates, whose parents have money, should be sent to the university for four or five years and "trained" into high school teachers, while the equally capable young people who have to make their own way in the world should be sent to the low grade normal school and in a maximum time of two years be redressed and padded so as to become teachers of the masses in the elementary schools.

This idea ignores that natural and wholesome differentiation which should be allowed to operate about the time the students reach the junior college year. At high school graduation the young people have not discovered themselves.

No one really knows them. Some of them by nature and attainments are destined for one thing and some for another.

It would be bad for education if the capable and ambitious students should be encouraged to go to the University in order to become high school teachers, while the unambitious and the plodders and those without money were in their contentment sent into short-cut normal school courses in order to be drilled and trained and mechanized into elementary teachers.

Again, those city training schools that undertake to make good teachers out of the high school graduates by training them a year or two in the routine of methods, merely supply the filling for the gaps in mechanized education. They manufacture round pegs for plugging round holes and square pegs for plugging square holes. That is all they do. That is what they are for.

Every normal school or college for teachers should have always a college atmosphere. Its libraries and laboratories should be of the best. It should give opportunity for the intending kindergartner, the elementary teacher and high school teacher to come into contact with one another. The intending teachers should have opportunity to differentiate into kindergartners, primary teachers, grammar school teachers and high school teachers after they have come into some knowledge of themselves, and it takes several years above high school graduation to attain such knowledge.

Differentiation should have regard for natural inheritance, for acquired intelligence, for social habits, for personal tastes, and for those spontaneities in human development which unfold themselves in such variety towards the end of a college education. Is it not evident, therefore, that the legitimate sphere of the normal school and of the college for teachers should reach into every public school of every kind and grade?

Your humble speaker directs a unique Model Rural

School in which some of the observing and practicing is done by prospective teachers who are already of the rank of college seniors. They are men and women of talent, skill and constructive ingenuity. Some of them will elect to teach in high schools, some, in elementary schools. Some will be principals of elementary schools. Some will teach in large, rich rural schools at seventy to a hundred dollars per month.

Through experiments like this, we hope and propose to make it exceedingly difficult in North Missouri for non-descripts and half educated persons to secure employment in rural and village schools. If the people are given a chance they will be just as critical in the matter of elementary teachers as they are in the selection of high school teachers. It is due to artificially created conditions, largely to arbitrary university domination that the abnormal and wasteful discrimination has been made whereby advanced scholarship is required for high school teachers and poor scholarship or none at all for elementary teachers.

What is the function of the normal school, judged by what efficient normal schools have done? From the outset normal-schools in some states stimulated all forms of public education, while public high school education was bitterly opposed by colleges and universities. In one state of the middle west, the original agitators for organized public high schools were men in the normal school faculty. In that state a group of normal school men aided by Dr. Wm. T. Harris, then Superintendent of Schools in St. Louis, inaugurated and organized the movement for public high schools, while the University and several colleges of that state opposed and obstructed the movement. Lately some men in the University of that state have offered to divide things with the normal schools and prepare all the high school teachers if the normal schools would prepare all the elementary teachers and agree not to prepare them too well. So we have some anomalies in education.

It is about time the normal school men in some states were waking up. The leaders in normal school education have been forcing the issue for many years, while the university men have changed their creed and reversed their policy within the last twelve of fifteen years. It hasn't been long since the university men ridiculed the professional preparation of teachers of all kinds and grades. Splendid college men thought it was sufficient in a teacher if he merely knew well the subject matter he was to teach. They told us many times that "Poets are born and not made." They went to the National Education Association even and chuckled when for some years Col. Parker, pleading for manual training, art, music and home economics, was "sat upon" by the dominant elements in the N. E. A. But the admirable and eloquent Col. Parker lived long enough to see the N. E. A. and all the other E. A.'s of our country line up for the adoption and the study of those rational methods of procedure which released the schools from tradition and from routine and treadmill processes and fetichisms. Col. Parker lived to see new definitions of the fundamentals and also due discrimination between the fundamentals and the conventionalities. He lived to see art, music, manual training, home economics, elements of agriculture and play in education recognized as fundamentals, while the three R's took rank as necessary conventionalities.

The old regime made the division into education for culture and education for utility. Now we see that the classics and abstract mathematics were always utilitarian as much as they were cultural, provided the one studying them intended to do something in the world. We see too, that the science laboratory, the garden, the gymnasium, the playground, agriculture, sewing, scientific cooking and geography of commerce are as much for culture as they are for utility and as much for culture as any studies, provided only that the mind is properly guided while it is being ex-

exercised in and upon these basic elements in human activities. It would be an isolated and blundering American who would claim today that foreign languages are productive of higher culture than the modern studies in music on a scientific basis, art on a historic foundation and home economics in its relation to sanitation and to life. These transformations in American educational conceptions have been influenced largely by one American normal school man and his devoted followers.

The struggles and agitations which lead to transformations like these constitute the legitimate sphere of influence for the normal school in public education. And let it not be forgotten: The American Normal School from its inception was both iconoclastic and constructive. It attacked and displaced innumerable obstructive abnormalities in teaching and stimulated everywhere creative ideality and endless variety in educational policies.

But there is danger that American education will some day become standardized, mechanized and Europeanized, so as to destroy the democracy of effort which has kept us in those constant agitations whereby the thousands have struggled for leadership and all have felt the uplift. Twenty years ago your teachers and mine in the college and university scorned the idea of pedagogics and principles of teaching. Inside a decade and a half the universities have come to believe in pedagogics and the principles of teaching. They strive to establish schools of education. Like new converts in other reforms, they are the most demonstrative in the shouting. In their new-born zeal they would at once divide up and standardize the work of preparing teachers. But the normal school men say: "Let us not jump at conclusions." "Let us try all things and hold fast to whatever is good for us all."

There is and for some time will be much of disadvantage and loss due to the experimentation of these recent converts to the professional education of teachers. They

are collating and publishing educational tenets and principles by the wholesale. They are announcing as discoveries in education things which normal school men have known for years. The university professors themselves begin to have "methods." But of all the deadening processes which it has been my misfortune to witness, some of the worst are in the high school instruction perpetrated by fledgling Ph. D.'s from important schools of education. These people have fixed views. They are confident. They are able to bring the MODUS OPERANDI of the university into the high school. There is increasing use of the terms "lecture," "quiz," and "exam" in the high school. But here the trouble begins; for if there is anything disastrous in high school instruction it is the grafting on of the university methods represented by the "lecture," the "quiz," and the "exam."

It is rather unfortunate, but many of these novices begin their pseudo-teaching without the slightest notion of adapting themselves to the concrete mental conditions and attitudes of the pupils.

Come to think of it, a good method is not a rule of action to be held in memory and passed over as a form from one group of persons to another group. It is rather a good habit of mental action or an attitude which excites mental action in others. Many of the fresh young Ph. D.'s, essaying to teach in the high schools seem unconscious of apperceiving notions or self-activity or spontaneity or constructive imagination in the students. Many of them stupify their students by delivering pre-digested generalizations to be swallowed without time for re-digestion or assimilation. Good teaching is a habit of acting on fresh concrete matter. A good habit in science teaching does not continue long after one has discontinued his concrete experiences in learning science. One is not likely to stimulate the mind of another into efficient action on new matter unless he has recently worked out something in new matter himself.

The trouble about the training school graduates, such as some I have met from Canada and from some northern and eastern states of our country, is that they have conscious processes, pedagogical grooves in which and through which they have learned to travel and through which they imagine all the pupils' minds should be made to run. But that does not imply good teaching. Such teaching does not stimulate thoughtfulness. It is more like cramming. Good teaching has no preliminary beaten paths. It blazes out constantly its own avenues to higher mentality and richer knowledge. It is incisive and definite insight into the mental attitudes and content of those taught while the learning process is going on. The learner is all the time changing. No two pupils are just alike. No good normal school prescribes a specific way to meet boys with fractions or with any other subject. Good teaching is a habit of quick, accurate and tenacious mentality, ready insight, versatility, skill in adjustments which keep the pupil in expectancy as to what may come next. The efficient normal school through the use of academic subjects and while teaching them produces a habit of mental alertness, of keen observation, of continuous constructive ideality, of abundant self-activity and of ready initiative. It is of college rank. Immature fledglings with barely a high school education and a few memorized devices and rules called "methods" and a little supervised practice, can do little to energize and direct young life. They cannot give large power to school education. They can only grow strong at the expense of their victims. They are characteristic of primitive conditions.

Some normal schools suffering from "retardation" will for a time be obliged to do work of low order looking to the tentative preparation of professional teachers. The full-fledged normal school or college for teachers is ultimately to produce side by side professional teachers equipped for city and for country, for elementary school, for kinder-

garten and for high school. These teachers will be differentiated into their several classes in view of both natural and acquired qualities, not too early in their respective courses and not in view of their early social conditions.

What a work is ours! We have to reach and stir and stimulate and lift up and ennoble the children of all the people in their several communities through literature, history, science, language, art and music, through knowledge and skill in the industries, in home economics, in manual training and healthful play and the numerous other agencies of school education. Can we hope to carry on efficiently the processes of education, unless we raise our standards and demand of the intending teachers and produce in them scholarly attainments and rich experiences and independent teaching skill? Can these things be done without a reasonably large variety of institutions full of ambitious men and women anxious to meet the needs of the people in every possible way? Need there be any feeling of jealousy among institutions? Is it not evident that the university through its school of education should reach and stimulate from the highest to the lowest, while the normal school in its locality should respond to every kind of need that may appeal to it?

The doctrine of this paper, therefore, is that the Normal School in responding to the needs of the people is bound to create ideals, to set up standards and to exemplify constructively the best attainable practices in school education; and there is no sphere in public education which is the exclusive domain of any one kind of institution and no phase of public school education into which the Normal School influence may not effectively reach.



NORMAL SCHOOL CHORUS AND MINNEAPOLIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, APRIL 13, 1910,  
AT THE CLOSE OF HOFFMANN'S CANTATA "MELUSINA." "ELIJAH" WAS GIVEN ON APRIL 14.

