

**SPEAKING AND WRITING ENGLISH; A
COURSE OF STUDY FOR THE EIGHT
GRADES OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,
WITH PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR
TEACHING COMPOSITION, AND A FULL
SET OF COMPOSITION STANDARDS**

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Speaking and Writing English; A Course of Study for the Eight Grades of the Elementary School,
with Practical Suggestions for Teaching Composition, and a Full Set of Composition Standards
by Bernard M. Sheridan

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BERNARD M. SHERIDAN

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BY

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS Course of Study was originally published in pamphlet form, under the present title, for use in the public schools of Lawrence, Massachusetts. The first edition was printed in October, 1915. So great a demand for the book followed that a second and a third edition were exhausted within a little over a year from the date of the first appearance. The publication of the work in regular book form is in response to a persistent demand for the Course from superintendents and teachers who have urged that it be made permanently available for their use.

Several new chapters have been added to Part One in the present edition. These, for the most part, are taken from the author's "Suggestions for the Improvement of Written Composition," published privately in January, 1917. Careful revision of other parts of the work has been made, wherever the results of the thorough trial of the plan in Lawrence have seemed to justify it. In the work of the primary grades considerable new material of practical value to teachers has been inserted. The number of illustrative compositions has been considerably increased. The grade "standards" are made to conform to the results of the author's continued first-hand study of children's capacity for growth in oral and written expression under this scheme of composition work. These changes mark no departure from the original aim and method of the plan. They merely serve to make both clearer to the teacher.

In the writing of this Course ideas and suggestions from many sources were freely drawn upon. Especial obligation is due to the excellent Course of Study in Elementary Composition prepared in 1913 by the Department of Public Instruction for the State of

New Jersey under the direction of the then Assistant Commissioner, George A. Mirick.

Before the actual writing of the Course was begun, three years ago, its general plan was discussed for many months with my friend and former associate, Mr. John J. Mahoney, at that time assistant superintendent of the public schools of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and now principal of the State Normal School in Lowell, Massachusetts. Our plans to become joint authors of the work were, for no fault of his or mine, never carried out. In the introduction to his recently published "Standards in English" he makes a gracious reference to me. I am sure it was not more cordially made than is my acknowledgment of his genuine helpfulness to me in this and many another piece of professional work undertaken together.

Finally, I wish to express my great indebtedness to Miss Leila M. Lamprey, my associate in Lawrence, for her invaluable assistance in the preparation of this book. It is Miss Lamprey's choice always to share the labor and never to share the praise. I cannot let her part in making this book go unacknowledged.

BERNARD M. SHERIDAN.

LAWRENCE, MASS.

September 18, 1917.

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM OF SPOKEN AND WRITTEN ENGLISH IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

LANGUAGE is by all odds the most important subject in the curriculum. It is, also, for many reasons the subject that is most difficult to teach. There has been an almost entire lack of standards for the teacher to go by. The language habits in the home and on the street are generally not good. There is so little "linguistic conscience" among grown-up people that it is difficult to arouse any in little children. These difficulties have been enormously increased in recent years by the influx into many communities of large numbers of non-English-speaking peoples, with the result that in many schools the teaching of English is no longer the teaching of the mother tongue, but the teaching of a foreign language.

The purpose of this course of study is to help the teacher to meet the elementary language problem more effectively and more hopefully. A few things it aims definitely to do:

(1) To replace vague, uncertain, and sometimes too ambitious aims with a purpose clearly defined and reasonably possible of achievement.

(2) To prescribe limits within which the elementary work in language is to be confined.

(3) To emphasize the teaching of oral language, both for its own sake and for its value as a foundation and preparation for written language, and to formulate a systematic and pro-

gressive plan of teaching this most important and much neglected side of English composition.

(4) To construct tentative standards of achievement for each of the eight elementary grades, in both oral and written language, which it seems reasonable to expect the majority of pupils to reach.

The lack of a clear and definite limitation of the work to be covered in language teaching in the elementary school has been responsible for much of the waste which has attended the teaching of the subject. Courses of study have called for more than could possibly be accomplished. The requirements have been too many and too vague. Many things have been taught that should have been postponed to the high school, since they do not appeal to the needs or the capacity of the stage of development of the ordinary elementary school pupil. Pupils who leave the elementary school before completing the course will be better off for having been taught *a smaller number of things thoroughly* and for having had *abundant practice in these few fundamental things*.

The kind and amount of language training in the elementary school should be largely determined, it seems fair to say, by the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the common language needs of people in everyday life?
2. What specific language habits can the school cultivate which will most usefully meet the demands that will be made upon the boy and girl at the end of their elementary school course?
3. What capacity for oral and written expression is possessed, or may with reasonable effort be acquired, by ordinary children in the different grades?

In the light of such a study of children's language needs and capacities, the following would seem to be a reasonable and workable aim for the elementary school: