

# **THE TEACHING OF ORAL ENGLISH**

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The teaching of oral English by Emma M. Bolenius

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**EMMA M. BOLENIUS**

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"In education the process of self-development should be encouraged to the fullest extent. Children should be led to make their own investigations, and to draw their own inferences. They should be told as little as possible, and induced to discover as much as possible. Humanity has progressed solely by self-instruction; and that to achieve the best results, each mind must progress somewhat after the same fashion, is continually proved by the marked success of self-made men. Those who have been brought up under the ordinary school drill, and have carried away with them the idea that education is practicable only in that style, will think it hopeless to make children their own teachers."—HERBERT SPENCER.

# THE TEACHING OF ORAL ENGLISH

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To

THE BOYS AND GIRLS WHO HAVE  
MADE THESE PAGES POSSIBLE

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## PREFACE

IN these days of modern efficiency, pedagogy must be practical. It must yield results. Both press and general public have arraigned the schools of the country for failure to produce effective spoken English. Thoughtful teachers acknowledge that pupils leave school with slovenly speech largely because there is no regular supervision of their speech and no systematic practice in oral composition. The new movement in teaching English, therefore, under the inspiring leadership of the *English Journal* and the *National Council of Teachers of English*, is a strong reaction in favor of oral English. Since the National Council of Teachers of English has recommended that much more of the time given to composition should be devoted to oral composition, and since a number of cities now require that candidates who wish to teach English must show a knowledge of oral methods and an ability to teach oral English, it is necessary to devise a plan

whereby oral composition can be combined with the other English work.

Common-sense suggests that slight improvement can be made in a pupil's habits of speech if he is given oral composition only six or seven times a term. What is needed is eighty talks a year or a minimum of at least one a week. Furthermore, in a democratic school system like ours a method must be applied to each pupil in a class, not to a favored few. Teachers, therefore, are groping for a way to systematize oral composition and correlate it with the other English work in the limited time allowed the whole subject.

Five years ago the writer began to experiment in teaching oral composition in a private school<sup>1</sup> of about five hundred students, in classes of from twenty to thirty pupils each. Later the same methods were used in the Central High School at Newark, N. J., a school of more than twelve hundred pupils, with the larger classes usually found in big city high schools. In both schools the good results were gratifying.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Education*, March, 1911, and *Popular Educator*, Sept.-Dec., 1911.