

Accomplishments in the Field of Adult Education Since the War

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EDUCATIONAL programs of citizenship training for adult men and women, constitute the most recent development of the public schools in the United States. The impetus for this work was furnished by the war-time disclosures of the tremendous number of native illiterates and non-English speaking immigrants in the military and naval forces of our country.

Illiteracy and Americanization campaigns were vigorously prosecuted in all sections of the country during the period from 1917-1920. Public interest was aroused and many types of Americanization programs were proposed to remedy these important ills in our body politic.

The assimilation of the foreign born was a new call for service and this appeal met a most enthusiastic response in every civic, fraternal and patriotic organization. Following the propaganda of the war period this work was given the careful consideration which it deserved. From 1918 to 1920 school programs of Americanization were well established in several States, notably, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Delaware, Ohio, South Dakota, and California.

The Illiteracy Commission of the National Education Association, under the able leadership of Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart, conducted live campaigns to arouse public interest in the size of the illiterate problem in the Southern States. Demonstration schools for adult illiterates were conducted by interested volunteers in a number of counties and the work was officially recognized by the State departments of education in North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Arkansas.

A National survey of the State programs of adult education in elementary subjects conducted by the author in the spring of 1925 showed the following interesting facts about the present status of this work:

1. Number of States that have enacted legislation favoring the establishment of adult school—31.

Minnesota	Ohio	Oregon
Iowa	Michigan	California
Missouri	Wisconsin	Massachusetts
North Dakota	Tennessee	Rhode Island
South Dakota	South Carolina	Connecticut
Nebraska	Alabama	Montana
Delaware	Mississippi	Idaho
District of Columbia	Arkansas	Arizona
New York	Maine	Utah
Pennsylvania	New Hampshire	Nevada
		Washington

2. Number of States that furnish educational leadership for adult education in the State Department of Education—21.

Minnesota	Alabama	Oregon
North Dakota	Mississippi	California
South Dakota	Arkansas	Delaware
New York	Massachusetts	District of Columbia
Pennsylvania	Rhode Island	South Carolina
Ohio	Connecticut	Maine
Wisconsin	Nevada	Oklahoma

3. Number of States that provide financial aid to local districts conducting adult classes—21.

Minnesota	Alabama	Washington
North Dakota	Maine	California
South Dakota	New Hampshire	Delaware
New York	Massachusetts	District of Columbia
Pennsylvania	Rhode Island	Virginia
Wisconsin	Connecticut	South Carolina
Tennessee	Nevada	Arizona

4. Number of local communities in the United States reported from 21 States in which adult classes are conducted—670.

5. Approximate number of students enrolled in classes, for adult illiterates and adult foreign born in United States—282,000. (21 States)

6. Number of States conducting special teacher training courses for adult schools—11.

California	Pennsylvania	Connecticut
Delaware	Wisconsin	Arkansas
South Carolina	Massachusetts	Oklahoma
New York	Rhode Island	

The 1920 Federal census shows that every State in the Union has more than 5000 foreign born adults and native illiterates. Thirty-one States to date have recognized the

importance and the needs of public school program for adults needing elementary civic instruction and have enacted legislation favoring this work. It is significant to note, however, that there are only 21 States in this group in which the work has been recognized by the State department of education as deserving of the services of a director and supervisors.

In addition to the 282,000 students recorded officially from the 21 States in the above survey there are undoubtedly 50,000 adults enrolled in classes in the larger cities of those States which have not provided State leadership for this work, e. g. Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Baltimore, Trenton, New Orleans, and Milwaukee.

This grand total of more than 325,000 adult students is the most significant proof of the strength of the adult education movement in the United States at the present time. Despite the waning of the public interest in the Americanization program and the serious retrenchment policy in public expenditures the school programs for native illiterates and adult foreign born have steadily improved during the past five years and the outlook from a National standpoint is most promising.

The immediate practical aims of Americanization work have to do with the teaching of English and the preparation for citizenship. The direct results of this work have shown that the adults who attend such classes are helped not only in learning to talk, read and write English, but also in understanding their duties and privileges as American citizens.

The bad social effects of illiteracy and the unfortunate misunderstanding of the public in regard to the disposition and contribution of the foreign born to our American life can be responsible in no small measure for the friendly spirit of be corrected only by the right type of educational program. The antidote for intolerance is right information, and the school programs for Americanization in the several States where this work has been conducted during the past decade have been coöperation and understanding found there at the present time.

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