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## Washington State Normal School Ellensburg, Washington. Public School Teaching as a Profession

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# Washington State Normal School

ELLENSBURG, WASHINGTON



Public School Teaching as a Profession

SCHOOL QUARTERLY

January, 1935

# Washington State Normal School

ELLENSBURG, WASHINGTON



## Public School Teaching as a Profession

by

H. J. WHITNEY, Registrar

This Institution is a Member of the American  
Association of Teachers Colleges

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## TEACHING

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I had rather earn my living by teaching than in any other way. In my mind, teaching is not merely a life work, a profession, an occupation, a struggle: it is a passion. I love to teach. I love to teach as a painter loves to paint, as a musician loves to play, as a singer loves to sing, as a strong man loves to run a race. Teaching is an art—an art so great and so difficult to master that a man or woman can spend a long life at it, without realizing much more than his limitations and his mistakes, and his distance from the ideal. But the main aim of my happy days has been to become a good teacher, just as every good architect wishes to become a good architect, and every professional poet strives toward perfection.

--- William Lyon Phelps.

# FOREWORD

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This bulletin has been prepared as a guide to those who have not decided for what vocation or profession they wish to make preparation. Present trends seem to indicate that teaching as a profession is steadily becoming more stable, more respected, and, consequently, more attractive. However, no one should decide to prepare for teaching without taking many things into consideration. Success in the work of teaching demands certain personality traits, certain attitudes, and very definite training.

This bulletin, then, attempts to present, in brief form, the demand for teachers in the State, the trends in salaries, promotion possibilities, the period of training, curriculum to be followed, financial outlay, and some results from investigations that have been made relative to the characteristics of successful teachers and the more common causes for failure.

# PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

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## INTRODUCTION

In spite of all the criticism that has been hurled at the public schools of the country in recent years, there is still a growing belief in the minds of a large proportion of American parents that we need more schooling rather than less. The faults of the public school, and they are numerous, are largely inherent in the forces that control the school and determine the course of study; in the administrative organizations that supervise and select the teachers; in the actions of legislators that determine the period of preparation for certification; and in the general attitude of the public toward the schools and the teachers. If this is the case, the faults will disappear in a large degree with the recognition, on the part of people at large, of the real function of the American public school.

Certainly there never was a time when the need for an education of the right kind was more keenly felt than at present. Though the school is only one of the many educational agencies, yet people are turning more and more to the school as the one agency capable of doing the job that so evidently needs to be done.

Many leading educators and other prominent citizens in all walks of life are beginning to advocate that the school should point the way to a better social order. The American common school is a place where the social customs and social habits that have been functional for many generations, the so-called "good and true," are taught. It is also fast becoming a place where each individual pupil will be called upon to develop habits of independent thinking and a scientific method of approach to the solution of his own personal problems and of the so-called social problems. Thus only can the school aid in bringing about a more rational social order.

The school must conserve and also create and initiate. Social creation and invention will be greatly expedited when a large proportion of the children in the common schools are taught that many social customs and habits are relatively stable from generation to generation. Such customs and habits must be taught or developed, they must be conserved. Children will discover that there are other elements of the present culture that are shifting more or less rapidly and that a method of approach to the solution of problems so caused is more advantageous than any definite set of habits or skills.

Whether or not young people acquire functional information for the time in which they live and develop the useful skills and attitudes will depend, to a large degree, upon the quality of the teaching they

receive. Certainly the quality of the product will reflect the quality of the teaching force.

If the school, then, is going to become of more importance than at present, and if the period of common school education is to be lengthened to include two years beyond the present secondary school, then teaching as a profession will become more stable, more highly respected, and consequently more attractive to the high school graduate. This situation will come all the more quickly if a fine type of young people will, after considering the advantages and the disadvantages, decide to make adequate preparation for teaching.

## WHAT CONSTITUTES ADEQUATE PREPARATION FOR TEACHING?

### I. LENGTH OF THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION.

The length of time required for preparation in Washington is different for each of the many types of positions open. Those who plan to teach in the elementary school in any of the units from the kindergarten through the ninth grade must complete three years of training in one of the schools accredited by the State for training elementary teachers. While the diploma issued at the close of three years of work is valid for teaching in the junior high school, grades seven, eight, and nine, yet many superintendents will now employ only those who hold a degree and the degree is issued only after the completion of four years of work.

Those who teach in high school must now complete four years of work plus at least two quarters. High school teachers may take all their work at an accredited college or university or they may, as many now do, attend one of the normal schools for one, two, or three years and then transfer to a standard college or university to complete their preparation. There are many advantages in this latter course, especially for those who plan to make teaching a life occupation and who anticipate ultimately holding the position of elementary school supervisor, principal, or superintendent. One advantage is that an individual so certified is qualified to teach in any of the units from the kindergarten through the high school, and consequently the opportunities for employment are the greater. Another advantage is that elementary school principals and superintendents, while usually college graduates, must, according to present certification requirements, have had some training in the elementary field.

At present, the normal school offers the three-year and the four-year courses. The Special Normal School Diploma is conferred upon those who complete the three-year course. Two papers are conferred upon those who complete the four-year course, the Advanced Special Normal School Diploma and the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Education. As stated above, the Special Diploma is valid in any of the school units from the kindergarten through the ninth grade; however, during the period of training each student chooses to make preparation for kindergarten-primary, intermediate, junior high school or rural school teaching, and the diploma issued specifically states the student's choice.



## **II. PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHER PREPARATION.**

All curricula for the preparation of teachers are based upon four assumptions that seem fairly valid. First, all teachers need a good general education; second, they need an intensive knowledge in at least two fields; third, they need technical education, commonly called professional education; and fourth, they need to develop certain particular skills. Let us consider each one somewhat in detail.

### **1. General Education.**

A good general education is the foundation upon which the teacher preparation is built. Other things being equal, the teacher who has the finest general education will make the best teacher. To acquire this general education demands much time and intensive study. This is one of the reasons why the time for the preparation of teachers has been lengthened from one year beyond high school to two years, then from two years to three years, and then, for some types of positions, from three years to four years or more.

The curriculum of the elementary school is the basis for determining what subjects are to be studied. Therefore, during the first two years each student in the Normal School takes at least one course in each of the following departments: Mathematics, Language and Literature, History, Geography, Social Science, Health Education, Science, Art, and Music. Courses in these departments help to develop a broad understanding of the world and of man, and furnish the prospective teacher with the subject matter necessary to teach the many different units in the elementary school curriculum.

### **2. Depth of Preparation.**

The second tenet is that, in addition to a broad foundation of general education, specialization in at least two departments, one called a major and the other a minor department, is necessary. While this depth of preparation is not so absolutely essential for teaching very young children as it is for teaching in the upper grades, yet, it is believed that, for the sake of a student's own intellectual development and growth, the major and minor are extremely important. The major and minor may be chosen in English; Art, Fine or Applied; Music; History; Mathematics; Social Science; Science; or Health and Physical Education.

### **3. Professional Preparation.**

The third assumption upon which teacher preparation is built is that each student should be thoroughly familiar with educational theory and with the implications of psychology for educational procedure.

General psychology, the psychology of the school subjects, the history of the development of the American school system and of public education, the organization and practices of the modern school, the nature of the learning process and methods of developing efficient character habits and attitudes, and of instruction in all the common branches; these are all taken up in the courses in the professional

field. The first course in Education is taken during the freshman year, the others during the sophomore and junior years.

#### **4. Necessary Skills.**

The skills particularly needed are those that are required for the handling of the classroom with efficiency. As an individual learns to drive a car only by driving and to swim only by swimming, so he learns to manage a classroom by practice in classroom management. The making of daily programs and lesson outlines, and the ability to work with groups of children are matters of skill developed only through practice. Each teacher in training teaches a class one hour a day for at least twenty-four weeks.

Adequate preparation for teaching, then, involves the acquiring of much general information in the many fields in which instruction is given; a depth of preparation in at least two departments of instruction; the development of technical knowledge in the fields of Education and Psychology; and lastly, the development of the necessary skills to make the schoolroom a good environment in which children can develop efficient character habits and attitudes.

### **CAN I BECOME A SUCCESSFUL TEACHER?**

This question is, of course, very difficult to answer. There are so many factors that determine success in teaching that no one can now say definitely that you can or that you cannot succeed. An analysis of some of the requirements of teaching will be given in order that you may use the items as rough measures of your ability.

#### **1. Results of Intelligence and Achievement Test.**

Nearly all high schools today give some sort of tests. By the scores you make on these tests you may determine your ability as compared with the other members of your class. The tests are not to be too highly relied upon, but, other elements in the necessary equipment of a teacher being about equal, if your test results place you in the middle third or above, you may be quite sure that you have sufficient native ability to become a good teacher. If you test in the lowest fourth, the chances are very much against your success as a teacher unless there are compensating personal characteristics. If you test low and still make average high school marks, you can probably do average work as a teacher. If test scores are not available, then your rank in your class is a rough measure of your ability.

#### **2. Have I the Necessary Personality Traits?**

Personality is the term we apply to the sum total of the impressions our behavior makes upon those who observe us. These impressions are very vital to success in high school and in college, they are of great importance in the securing of and in the retaining of a teaching position, and they are extremely important in the classroom. In the next paragraph a brief list of the activities of the teacher is given. You can readily see the importance of personality in all these activities.

A teacher is responsible for the classroom instruction, for classroom management, and for supervision of the extra-curricular activities of pupils. A teacher has personal relations with other members of the teaching staff and with other members of the community. A teacher has activities concerned with professional and personal advancement and in connection with the school plant and supplies. Each of these activities or relations demands definite and specific personality traits for satisfactory performance.

Many studies have been made of the personality traits possessed in common by teachers who have been rated as good or superior. The items in the list are not given with any reference to their relative importance; the point is that, by rather general agreement, the traits of so-called good teachers may be described in these terms: dependability, loyalty, sincerity, moral uprightness, fine appearance, good judgment, self control, considerateness, intelligence, enthusiasm, adaptability, cooperation, personal magnetism, altruism, breadth of interest, leadership.

The above list might be expanded. One author lists seventy-three traits. If you do not possess some of these traits in a recognizable degree, they can be cultivated and developed by persistent effort, and he who is conscious of the lack of a specific trait has thereby taken the first step in its development.

### **3. Personality Traits that Appear to be the Cause of or that Contribute to the Failure of Teachers.**

In connection with the discussion of traits possessed by successful teachers, it is pertinent to give the traits possessed by teachers rated as doing inferior work. Some of these traits are due to faulty early home environment and others are distinctly deficiencies in personality. The usual causes of failure are poor discipline, inability to cooperate, tendency to gossip, immorality, lack of teaching skill, disloyalty to superiors, inability to adapt to specific situations, the keeping of bad company, little desire for professional growth, irresponsibility, and lack of social sympathy. This list might be expanded, but the striking thing about nearly all the items is that these defects can be eliminated and the necessary abilities acquired by any teacher who has the desire to do so.

It is well to bear in mind that the personality traits necessary for successful teaching are, in a great measure, the same traits that are desirable elements in the personalities of mature, competent men and women in any walk of life anywhere in the world.

## **CAN I AFFORD THE LONG NECESSARY PERIOD OF PREPARATION?**

Under this heading are indicated the cost of attending school for one year and the ways students may secure assistance in meeting their expenses. The specific data given refer only to the institution responsible for the publication of this bulletin. The expenses incident to attending any institution will depend upon the type of institution and up-

on local conditions. The figures are approximate, but are based upon the budgets of a large number of students.

### I. COST PER YEAR.

#### 1. Yearly expenses of students who live in one of the dormitories and board in the dining room.

a. Board and room .....	\$221.00
b. Fees (no tuition) .....	50.00
c. Books and necessary supplies .....	25.00
	_____
Total .....	\$296.00

As the amount spent for personal clothing and for recreation differs so greatly, no attempt has been made to include these items. The amount for clothing need not greatly exceed what would be needed even if one were not in school. Most of the entertainments at the institution are free to students, the expense being defrayed from the student fee included in item "b" above.

#### 2. Yearly expenses of students who live off-campus in house-keeping rooms.

a. Room and food supplies .....	\$45.00 to \$60.00
b. Fees (no tuition) .....	50.00
c. Books and necessary supplies .....	25.00
	_____
Total .....	\$120.00 to \$135.00

### II. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT.

A large number of students in residence each year earn a part of their expenses. There are many ways of self help. A number of homes employ students and give board and room for remuneration. Much of the janitor work of the college is done by men students. Some young men work in garages, service stations, grocery stores, and other business establishments. Women students assist in the dining rooms and in the library and act as secretaries in the offices of the college.

Since the winter of 1933, federal aid has been available to needy students to the amount of ten to twenty dollars per month, or an average of fifteen dollars per month. The type of work for which students receive federal money depends somewhat upon the season of the year. It includes work in offices, laboratories, libraries, and work for civic organizations.

### III. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE THROUGH LOANS.

This institution has a loan fund from which students who have been in residence some time can borrow sufficient to help them through the school year. The Rotary Club and the Kiwanis Club of the local community have been generous enough to make funds available to those who can give reasonably good security. The local P. E. O. Sisterhood makes loans to young women students.

## WHAT ARE MY OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT?

For a number of years prior to 1930, about eighty-five per cent of all who were certified secured positions. Frequently, this represented all who wished to teach as some married and others transferred to other institutions of higher learning. During the depression years of 1930-1933, the percentage of those who secured positions was much lower, but since then the percentage of those placed is even better than it was in former years. This means that the teacher who is well qualified by intelligence, by training, and by personality is reasonably sure of appointment. Every institution of higher learning in the State has a well organized placement service and every effort, possible, is made to place graduates in positions well fitted to their specific training.

Today there are 10,900 teachers in the elementary, junior high, and senior high schools of Washington; 1,198 of these did not teach in Washington during 1933-34, thus the yearly turn-over is nearly 11 per cent. The present indications are that the higher institutions of the State will not much more than meet this yearly demand for new teachers. Just how long this condition will prevail, cannot be foretold. As economic conditions improve, the usual percentage of turnover will even be augmented by the need for teachers to take care of the increased enrollment and many more will be needed to decrease the very heavy teacher pupil-load that now prevails in nearly all the schools of the State.

## WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT?

The long view compels every prospective teacher to ask, "What are my chances for advancement?" If the beginning salary is low, can I hope in a few years to have enough income to continue my studies and be able to save a portion of my income? A young man will want to know if, in time, he can expect to have sufficient income to allow him to continue his studies, to travel, to provide insurance, and to marry. Many factors will decide. There is the uncertainty of general economic conditions effecting the permanence of employment, the question of the relative supply and demand of well trained teachers, and the individual's own personal equipment. The ability to meet and cope with local social conditions often determines the chances of advancement.

For men, the usual order of advancement is from classroom teaching in a small place to the same type of position in a larger place, then to the principalship of the building in which one has made a marked success. A man well equipped by training, experience, and personality and upon whom fortune shines may hope in ten years to rise from a position as classroom teacher with a salary of \$75.00 a month to a principalship of an elementary or high school with a salary of \$200.00 or more per month. A good superintendency will be open to the one exceptionally well prepared in from twelve to fifteen years.

For women, the road to advancement is by a somewhat different

route. Under present social sanctions, most of the principalships and superintendencies are held by men, though some women hold very responsible elementary school principalships. One of the finest opportunities for a woman teacher is to perfect herself in the art of teaching. The superior classroom teacher will always be in demand at a salary comparable to that of many principals. Women will be in demand as special teachers of Art, Music, Home Economics, and Penmanship. Many of the schools of the State are departmentalized and require special teachers of the common branches, such as History, Geography, Mathematics, Reading, Literature, etc.

## WHAT REWARDS MAY I EXPECT?

### 1. Material Rewards.

There is no general statement that can be made about the salary of the beginning teacher. The trend of salaries has been continually upward for the last fifty years. A half century ago, the average monthly salary of the beginning teacher was somewhere near fifty dollars. In the years just prior to 1930, the average salary of beginning teachers in Washington had risen to about one hundred and fifteen dollars per month. Of course, the average salary of all teachers in the State dropped after 1930. As economic conditions improve, as the quality of the teaching staff is improved by better methods of selection and training, salaries will doubtless rise again.

The figures given in the next paragraph are taken from data compiled by the State Department of Education at Olympia and indicate the salaries that are being paid during the present school year, 1934-1935.

The average salary of the eight hundred and forty-eight teachers in the one-room rural school of Washington is approximately \$75.00 per month on the nine month basis. The average monthly salary of the five thousand eight hundred and eighty-seven teachers in the grade schools is approximately \$122.00 per month, though the range will be from \$50.00 per month to \$200.00 per month. The twenty-nine Supervisors have an average monthly salary of \$200.00, the two hundred and fifty-one elementary school principals receive an average of \$202.00 per month, and the two hundred and nineteen school superintendents receive an average salary of \$250.00 per month. The range of the salaries in each category will be great, depending upon the size of the city, the number of teachers employed, the experience of the candidate, the willingness of the school board to secure the best person available, and many other factors.

The salary of junior high school principals is just a little more than that of the elementary school principals, but the average monthly salary of the junior high school teacher is about twenty per cent greater than that of the elementary school teacher. This is probably due to the fact that a large part of the junior high school teachers have had four years or more of preparation and hold a college degree, while many elementary

teachers have had only two years of college work. The average salary of the senior high school teachers is slightly higher than that of the junior high school teachers.

## **2. Intangible Rewards.**

The so-called intangible rewards are the deep satisfactions that accrue from having rendered a worthy service to the state, having aided and guided individuals in their development, having the pleasure of doing work one enjoys and for which a fine preparation has been made, and having dealt with vital and elemental things. As a servant of the state, a teacher renders a service second to none when he aids his pupils to become worthy citizens. As an instructor of youth, he enjoys the immortality of living in grateful memories of his former pupils long after his actual labors have ceased. Such a future is worthy of the careful consideration of every high school boy or girl in the State of Washington.

## CONCLUSION

This pamphlet has attempted to present to high school students and their advisors the opportunities and rewards of the teaching profession. The future welfare of the country depends in a large measure upon its schools. Those engaging in the work of the schools must see in their vocation something more than a mere livelihood. Teachers deal with human beings in their formative period. As they come in contact with the boys and girls of the state, they have the privilege of exerting a tremendous influence.

Let the young man or woman who seriously thinks of teaching seek out some successful teacher, principal, or superintendent and frankly talk over the entire situation. In addition to the material presented in this bulletin, the council and advice of one experienced in the field will be invaluable. The work of teaching is too important and the mistakes too costly for anyone to enter the profession except as a result of the most painstaking inquiry.

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