

SPEECH EDUCATION PROBLEMS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS*

MABEL F. GIFFORD

*Chief, Bureau of Correction of Speech Defects
California State Department of Education*

The interest of school administrators in speech education has increased greatly during the last few years because of results obtained by special speech instruction. More and more frequently teachers are being sought who have special training in speech correction and speech improvement. The demand for speech improvement makes it necessary for us to have the help of the entire speech education forces.

I am making a plea for help, both in the public schools and in teacher training. There should be a definite effort on our part to work with curriculum makers in teacher training institutions, so that such courses as will meet the actual needs of speech education in the public schools will be provided; also to persuade school administrators to make speech education a part of their respective courses of study. Of course it will be necessary to provide adequately trained teachers before such courses of study in the public schools can become effective.

The needs of the field, as I see them, are:

1. More trained speech correctionists to care for the cases of speech defects and disorders not yet under instruction.
2. Speech and personality development at the different levels—primary, intermediate, junior high, and secondary levels.
3. Coordination between the speech arts and speech therapy groups.
4. Coordination of speech arts and speech therapy with the regular curriculum at the different levels.
5. Adequate courses in speech education for teacher training institutions to cover the field requirements.
6. Fundamental speech courses to be given to classroom teachers that they may supplement the work of the speech arts and speech therapy groups.
7. Coordination of guidance departments and health agencies with the speech development and speech correction fields.

* Based on address delivered at the Los Angeles, 1940, convention of Western Association of Teachers of Speech.

8. Help from trained workers in giving modern tests in the diagnosis of speech personality, including speech history, physical examination, sound discrimination tests, mental ability tests, and educational achievement tests. The findings should then be evaluated and made available.
9. Help from those who understand the situation in securing the cooperation of school administrators.

While probably the majority of California speech teachers participated in the work done by a state-wide committee under the able direction of Mr. McGinnis from 1932 to 1934, there is need now for an evaluation and application of the findings of this committee. These findings were incorporated in a report compiled as a W. P. A. Project and published by the State Department of Education in May, 1937.* Research bearing upon speech has shown the need of continuous revision of knowledge, but you will find in this bulletin valuable source material to be used as a basis for further study, and as a guide in planning coordinated courses of study. You will also find the coordinated course of study undertaken by the Washington Speech Association in 1936 of much interest.

A few teacher training institutions in California are offering courses in speech correction as part of the regular program, but at the present time the needs of the speech correction field are largely taken care of in summer sessions. Since every teacher needs experience in regular classroom work before undertaking the teaching of a highly specialized subject, this arrangement will suffice for the present in training speech correction teachers.

All classroom teachers, however, should have fundamental courses in speech education as part of their undergraduate work in teacher training institutions. We need the support of this entire organization in advocating the extension of speech education courses for all classroom teachers. If classroom teachers are trained in speech education, they will be able to coordinate the needs of the fields of speech arts and speech therapy with the regular school curriculum at the different levels. They will be able to supplement the work of the speech arts and speech therapy groups in correct habit formation.

The privilege of taking courses in speech arts has been afforded a limited proportion of high school students, but the benefits of speech improvement have not been given to the entire student

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body. More emphasis on speech improvement should be given not only in high schools, but in elementary schools as well.

Individual guidance in the schools, as well as child guidance clinics available to them, was expressed by Professor Donald G. Patterson of the University of Minnesota as an indication of the trend from mass education to more individualized procedures to meet individual needs. Professor Patterson states, "This movement toward the individualization of mass education means that the school will become less and less concerned with merely imparting information. In short, the guidance function of the school and college will become one of the most important functions to be performed. Guidance, instead of being added or tolerated as a fifth wheel, will become the primary concern of the administrator, the college dean, the school superintendent, the high school principal, and members of the faculty."

A philosophy of speech education should include as an important phase of its work individual diagnosis and pupil adjustment.

A judicious use of tests and measurements in determining mental ability, social intelligence, personality adjustment, interests and vocational aptitudes, language and reading ability, and educational achievement is particularly applicable to speech analysis. There is need for proficient help in cities and counties from trained workers in giving modern tests in the diagnosis of speech personality, which, as before stated, include speech history, physical examination, sound discrimination tests, mental ability tests, and educational achievement tests. The findings should then be evaluated and made available.

The facilities of the school, cooperation of administrators, counselors, and clinics, as well as the services of testing bureaus, will determine the extent to which the teacher will make use of these tests.

If administrators are to cooperate in an extensive speech education project, it is necessary for them to be informed on the full significance of the speech personality, and to see that the instruction involves the whole personality.

At a Committee Conference in 1936 the Washington State Speech Association discusses the newer concept of speech education as follows:

"Its primary aim is to encourage and guide the development of personality—i.e., to help students discipline their intellectual powers, balance and control their emotional life, enrich their contacts with the world, and broaden all their interests . . . the special province of speech education is to achieve these broad individual and social purposes by working directly to improve speech abilities . . . its specific aim is to provide us with the best possible technique for carrying on social relations."

In the speech therapy field, there are numerous theories and therapies for the correction of stuttering. While there are certain differences in these theories, there are definite points of agreement. Relaxation or freedom from tenseness seems to be one of these basic principles. The second common goal is the building of confidence in speech situations. Anyone familiar with speech therapies knows that this element is considered important by all the correctionists and various details of treatment are delegated to this end.

The principle of suggestion is well represented in practically all therapies, whether it is called by this name or not.

In fact, there seems to be a technique common to the therapies which might be classified as speech reeducation treatment. The learning theories as proposed by psychologists may be involved in this theory, viz., trial and error, conditioned response, the Gestalt insight, and the recognition of the relation between speech and social blockage as evidenced by emotional maladjustment.

While these theories and treatments may overlap in meaning, it is possible that the use of a different classification would still include most of these common denominations.

Instead of focussing attention upon the differences, it is better to unite upon agreements and pull together harmoniously toward our common goal.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

With no Convention in November, membership renewals in the Association have been coming in very slowly. Added to the lack of Convention is the fact the editorial and business offices have been, until recently, almost without secretarial help; in consequence it has not been possible to send you reminders as we have in past years. Please cooperate by forwarding your renewal at once. \$2.00 for regular, \$4.00 for sustaining membership.