

## VII. THE TEACHERS WHO TRAIN STUDENTS FOR COUNTRY SCHOOL TEACHING

### 1. Well Prepared Teachers Hard to Find.

Since there is in Wisconsin no institution especially designed to prepare the teachers who are to train students for country school teaching, much of the direct preparation needed by training teachers must be secured while they are in service. No one enters upon his work as fully prepared for it as for any particular grade work, for any regular high school work or for any departmental work in a normal school. Nine times out of ten the training teacher is called upon for the first time in her teaching experience to teach pedagogy and school management and to plan and supervise observation and practice. Moreover, she must not only illustrate correct pedagogical principles, in all her teaching, but at the same time she must continually invite discussion of her own method of classroom technique by members of the class.

### 2. Qualifications of training Teachers.

a. **Vigorous health and attractive personality.** No young people should be considered as candidates for training positions unless they have vigorous health, and personalities which attract students. They should be inclusive in their sympathies and democratic in their attitude.

b. **A broad education coupled with large interests.** Training teachers should have not only scholarship, but an outlook and sympathy broad enough so that they can do their work easily and not feel the drudgery of it. Normal graduation should be supplemented by whatever advantage of higher education they have been able to secure. Resolute facing of the prosaic, workaday world should have helped to confirm their faith in the fact that material advantages which cannot be secured can be dispensed with. They should be people who have had the privilege of companionship with stimulating and educated persons.

c. **Right attitude toward country life.** The present attitude of training teachers toward country life should be discovered. It is of great importance. The principal hiring them should be able to answer in the affirmative the following questions: Do these teachers recognize the present opportunity for rural development? Do they know country conditions at first hand because of having lived in the country? Are they interested in becoming acquainted with the local conditions in the county where they are to work? It is a great asset when training teachers can testify that they were brought up in country homes, attended country schools and had

some experience as country teachers. If they cannot qualify under all of these three heads, they should at least be able to qualify under one.

d. **Variety in teaching experience.** Training teachers should have had variety in their former teaching experience. One who has taught in the country and in the grades or who has taught city grades and high school classes has had this necessary variety.

### 3. Conditions confronting us

a. **Early country experience valuable.** For years the practice has been very common in this state for young people of first rate ability to go directly from high school to a state normal, and so begin their experience in city grades without any country school experience. Until very recently country teaching was, in general, chosen only by those financially unable to go to a state normal at once, or by those who wanted to find out before they took training work, whether or not teaching would prove a congenial vocation. This fact makes it hazardous to insist on country school experience in all cases. Valuable as it is, if it is demanded, people of unusual teaching ability may be considered ineligible and schools may be compelled to take mediocre teachers instead.

b. **Careful inquiry necessary.** The selection of good training teachers demands time and care. In the past, boards seem frequently to have expected miracles to happen because they have been willing to assign the task of training country teachers to persons who were brought up in towns or cities, who attended only city grades and who have had no country experience. It may be necessary perhaps to continue hiring training teachers without exacting previous country experience in rare cases for a few years. But it should be done only under protest and after making a most careful inquiry, which inquiry has established the fact that it is the best that can be done.

c. **First hand acquaintance with country life.** The remedy to be applied will be a compromise, temporarily, but preventive measures must be adopted. Publicity ought to be given to the fact that persons with country experience are greatly to be preferred for these positions, and after a few years, doubtless, country experience can be insisted on as a necessary qualification; it does not seem that conditions warrant doing so in all exigencies at present. But because training school boards cannot get all that they want, let them not forget to bestir themselves, for the supply of excellent teachers with first hand knowledge of country conditions will not be forthcoming unless boards are quite insistent in their demands.

(1) *Let boards hiring training teachers with no country experience first ascertain that they are genuinely interested in acquainting themselves with country conditions.* They may study the best new books on country school improvement and county life progress. They should feel that the problem they are helping to solve is worthy of their best efforts to get the knowledge they lack.

(2) *Training teachers need not remain long unacquainted with country problems even if they are at first.* They may actually live in the country during a part of their vacations; they may visit a number of country schools engaged in training country teachers; they may attend and appear on the program of county and other sectional meetings in which country problems are considered. There are summer schools connected with a few of our great universities which offer courses well fitted to meet the needs of training teachers. It is not uncommon for a few Wisconsin training teachers to take advantage of these courses every summer. As training teachers in greater numbers attend such summer schools, country school progress is more certain to be accelerated.

By enumerating a few of the different opportunities open to anyone who cares to become fitted for the task of training country teachers, it is discovered that we have so far scarcely begun to any appreciable extent to make use of many available ways open for fulfilling aright our purpose to give "the country child every whit as good an educational opportunity as that at present enjoyed by the most favored city child attending an American public school".

#### 4. A favorable local environment important

Teachers should be chosen because they rank highest not only in health, personality, education, teaching power and desirable experience of any available candidates but because they are in possession also of the right attitude toward country life. After paying attention to all these qualifications it is necessary to frankly recognize that the ability of training teachers to develop into increasingly valuable teachers is in a measure dependent upon whether or not the local environment favors growth in their work and enjoyment of it.

a. Adequate financial compensation must be held out to training teachers.

b. They must have freedom to develop initiative.

c. **Leisure for recreation and a natural life.** They must have enough leisure to forget at times the responsibilities of their position. Many teachers through eagerness to help, undertake programs beyond their strength, and thus fail to do either themselves or their students justice. Training teachers should know not only school people but people engaged in other occupations, and they should familiarize themselves with the questions that come up for discussion in the ordinary family. It will add to the worth of all training teachers if they have a genuine interest in the commonplace human details which must necessarily absorb the time of most busy fathers and mothers.

#### 5. Planning for the Future

The history of the future of the country districts depends upon the forces set in motion now. Nothing should be neglected which will help to entice into this work in Wisconsin, men and women possessing "generous personal culture, liberal views, good pedagogical training, satisfactory teaching experience, good sense, and a knowledge and sympathy with rural conditions, people and life".