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## STUDENT-AIMS IN ENGLISH

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When the pupils of the Senior class in the Hughes High School, Cincinnati, came to their first recitation in English for September, 1913, they were told that at the next meeting I should ask them to write a little paper on the following subject: "The Benefits Which I Should Like to Derive from the Study of English." I assured them that these papers would not be marked and criticized but that they would be used for the purpose of getting a point of view and of discovering the ends which students themselves would like to attain. Emphasis was laid upon the importance of giving frank, sincere statements which would not reflect a classmate's opinion nor anticipate my approval, but which would represent personal opinion alone. By removing the thought of marks and the fear of criticism, I hoped to gain some insight into the minds of my pupils and some understanding of their purposes in order that I might the better adapt my instruction to their needs.

At the second meeting of the classes, two hundred and forty-six papers were written in accordance with the request. One hundred and twenty-five were written by boys and one hundred and twenty-one by girls. Almost without exception they bore on the face the marks of sincerity. For this reason they afford an interesting and profitable study of the student mind.

It is, of course, impossible to determine how far the expressed opinions represent the original thought of the writers and how far they reflect the influences of instruction of the preceding three years of the course. The most that can be said is that they show with reference to English studies the present state of mind of the Senior class of a large and representative high school.

For the purpose of making a systematic study of the numerous aims that were mentioned by the members of the class, the scheme of classification by functions, as suggested by Bagley,<sup>1</sup> was adopted.

<sup>1</sup> W. C. Bagley, *Educational Values* (Macmillan, 1911), pp. 119-20.

The educative material embodied in the subject of English functions in different ways. The benefits which students wish to attain are the forms of conduct-control which result from this different functioning. In the tables (pp. 368-69) the related forms of conduct-control are grouped under the functions which engender

## 1. THE TRAINING FUNCTION

	Boys	Girls
Correct and fluent speech . . . . .	50	51
Command of English language . . . . .	41	23
Grammar and punctuation . . . . .	14	9
Practical use in life . . . . .	8	9
Spell correctly . . . . .	7	6
Commercial rather than literary benefit . . . . .	7	4
Read well . . . . .	5	4
Correct pronunciation . . . . .	4	1
Concentration of mind . . . . .	2	.....
Neatness . . . . .	1	.....
Self-confidence and control in public . . . . .	3	5
Strengthen memory . . . . .	.....	1
Penmanship . . . . .	.....	1
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>114</b>

## 2. THE INSTRUCTIONAL FUNCTION

Large vocabulary . . . . .	51	43
Biography of authors . . . . .	23	27
Recognize and understand quotations . . . . .	13	9
General information . . . . .	12	8
History of English literature . . . . .	11	12
History of English language . . . . .	2	2
Knowledge of general literature . . . . .	1	3
Knowledge of current topics . . . . .	1	3
Knowledge of foreign countries . . . . .	2	.....
Aid in other studies . . . . .	.....	4
Knowledge of history . . . . .	1	1
Acquisition of ideas . . . . .	1	3
Aid in college . . . . .	1	1
Knowledge of meter . . . . .	1	.....
Memorize parts of poems . . . . .	.....	4
Aid in telling stories . . . . .	.....	1
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>121</b>

## 3. THE INSPIRATIONAL FUNCTION

Ideals and lofty sentiments . . . . .	12	7
Learn helpfulness to others . . . . .	2	.....
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>

4. THE DISCIPLINARY OR INDIRECT TRAINING FUNCTION

	Boys	Girls
Power to express self adequately.....	24	37
Ability to write good letters.....	14	7
Ability to write well in general.....	30	23
Standards for judging literature (Discrimination).....	11	23
Mastery of style.....	14	13
Power of analysis.....	3	8
Aid in thinking clearly and independently	4	5
Aid in quick and accurate thinking.....	1	2
Aid in studying other languages.....	1	3
Assistance in debate and in extemporaneous speaking.....	4	1
Aid in teaching.....		2
Aid in strengthening the imagination.....	3	
Total.....	109	124

5. THE RECREATIVE FUNCTION

Knowledge and understanding of English literature.....	48	66
Appreciation of and taste for good books..	38	40
Social grace of good conversation.....	38	36
Pleasure and relaxation.....	27	22
Culture and refinement.....	5	2
Enjoyment of Shakspeare and of good plays in general.....	1	5
Total.....	157	171

6. THE INTERPRETATIVE FUNCTION

Breadth of mind (liberal education and broad outlook).....	26	30
Appreciation of nature.....	1	3
Knowledge of life.....	1	2
Knowledge of character.....		7
Human sympathy.....		1
Aid in study of art.....		2
Aid in understanding current literature.....		1
Aid in understanding lectures and addresses.....		1
Aid in understanding problems of today..	1	
Aid in travel.....		5
Aid in forming opinions.....	3	
Total.....	32	52

them. The figures in the columns indicate the number of times the various aims were mentioned.

These tables show that the recreative function of English, "designating the operation of materials that are to result in tastes, sentiments, and interests,"<sup>1</sup> is most frequently in the minds of students. The relatively small returns that are expected from the inspirational function and the interpretative function suggest either that the students are too young to realize the values to be derived from these sources or that their previous courses in English have not laid sufficient emphasis upon this aspect of the study.

The boys of the class seem to expect somewhat more than the girls from the training function of English. The girls expect more from the disciplinary, recreative, and interpretative functions. The girls, although fewer in number than the boys, have fifty-two different aims, while the boys have forty-eight.

It is gratifying to note on the part of both boys and girls a desire to cultivate a taste for good reading and also to acquire standards of judgment so that they may discriminate between the good and the bad. This attitude of students suggests the thought that possibly the modern tendency toward the substitution of current literature in the place of the old and the classic will not satisfy the sober judgment of the pupils themselves. They want to know the best. Of their own volition they do not choose the old favorites, but they want to be shown how to appreciate the better things in order that future choice may be on a high instead of on a low plane.

Instead of being a theoretical and somewhat decorative subject, as some have conceived it, English is shown here to be a study from which many of the most useful and practical benefits are to be derived. It is expected to train boys and girls for efficiency in the business world; for grace and charm in the conversations of polite society; for quick, accurate, and independent thinking; for self-confidence and self-control in difficult situations. It is expected to give knowledge, pleasure, power, and understanding. A study of these student-aims makes clear the reason why English is and should be the heart of every normal curriculum.

<sup>1</sup> W. C. Bagley, *op. cit.*, p. 120.