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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AND FEDERAL
EDUCATION POLICY, 1958-1966

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY
CURTIS MASON
CHICAGO, IL
MAY 2011

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To Erica

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INTRODUCTION

Scrambling in reaction to the Russian launch of Sputnik in 1957, Congress quickly passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958. This act, which triggered an unprecedented amount of federal funding toward public schools, explicitly linked the school subjects of mathematics, science, and foreign language to the foremost issues of national security. When it was passed, The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) expressed concern over the subject of English being left out of federal money and mobilized to shift public and congressional perception over its importance.¹ The NCTE, along with the Modern Language Association (MLA) produced “The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English” in 1958. Following this document, the NCTE compiled and published *The National Interest and the Teaching of English: A Report of the Profession* in 1961. This document, aimed directly at Congressional members, was successful in acquiring federal funds. In 1961, money was authorized toward Project English, a program that funded nationwide conferences and study centers to research English curricula with the ultimate goal of constructing curriculum guides that could be readily used in classrooms. The NCTE continued to press Congress for the inclusion of English within the NDEA through additional publications and Congressional testimony, and in 1964 Congress revised the NDEA to include additional funding for English and reading.

¹ Albert R. Kitzhaber, “The Government and English Teaching: A Retrospective View,” *College Composition and Communication* 18, no. 3 (1967): 135.

This process was unique for two reasons. First, it represented an uncharacteristic cooperative relationship between the two most powerful organizations in the English discipline. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the MLA and the NCTE espoused contrasting messages of the purpose of English in schools with the former stressing academic competence and the latter advocating student-centered curricula.² The 1958 conference signified the first formal alliance between the two.³ The second notable feature is that the NCTE changed its tone and altered its mission in order to assume greater advantage to acquire federal funding. In examining publications and policy documents from the early and mid 1950s, the NCTE defined the teaching of English broadly and advocated a curriculum producing relevant student experiences.⁴ Following the passage of the NDEA, the NCTE advocated more academic rigor and a content-centered curriculum.⁵ This process shifted in the mid 1960s. Prompted in part by British participants at the 1966 Anglo American Conference on English at Dartmouth who advocated policies akin to earlier NCTE positions, trends in the teaching of English shifted back to subject-centered instructional philosophies. New adaptations of earlier recommended strategies of English instruction became popular and remained in schools until the 1980s.

² Diane B. Langston, "A Historical Construct of English as a Discipline: 100 Years of Conflict and Compromise" (PhD diss., Georgia State University, 1995), 101-151.

³ Maureen D. Goggin, *Authoring a Discipline: Scholarly Journals and the Post-World War II Emergence of Rhetoric and Composition* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), 67.

⁴ Sanford R. Radner, "An Historical Analysis of the Presidential Addresses of the National Council of Teachers of English: 1912-1955" (PhD diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1958), 17.

⁵ Arthur N. Applebee, *Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English: A History* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974), 185-215.

In this analysis I primarily focus on the issues surrounding those changes from 1958-1966, however I place those actions within wider historical issues. I first consider the nineteenth century English curriculum and the origin of the NCTE, an organization created from anger and concern over the encroaching influence of college entrance requirements onto secondary English curricula. I then consider the NCTE's advocacy on English and governmental issues in the early part of the twentieth century. Broadly, they recommended subject-centered, progressive education teaching strategies. I place these ideas within the life adjustment education movement that advocated differentiated instructional methods to adapt secondary students to maturity and social issues in adulthood. I claim that NCTE advocacy aligned with many aspects of the movement including a focus on individualized learning and using literature to connect with students' experiences. After a discussion of the role of the NCTE in attempting to steer federal research during the early 1960s, I present a deeper discussion of issues within the mid to late 1960s including a connection between an increased focus on the disadvantaged student and the shift in NCTE perspective away from overtly academic, skill-based learning.

Theoretical Connections

Guiding my analysis are three broad theoretical connections. These are areas of research outside of the main focus of my project, however they connect with the actions of the NCTE during 1958-1966. The connections I investigated are (1) governmental agenda setting, (2) notions of research steering, and (3) organizational boundary definitions.

Agenda Setting

Agenda-setting research is a field within the public policy discipline that examines how issues appear on a government agenda. Kingdon claims that political entrepreneurs are able to affect public policy by capitalizing on an issue during a policy window, or opportunistic period that lends itself to change. The entrepreneurs could surface as individuals or organizations inside or removed from formal government operations. Regardless of their position, they seek to advance a specific cause.⁶ Their ability to do so depends in part on an accommodating climate that makes a proposal easier to advance. This promising climate is the policy window.

In this theoretical framework, the NCTE represented policy entrepreneurs. As described by Roberts and King, there are ten categories of action that policy entrepreneurs could engage in:

idea generation activities; problem framing activities; dissemination activities; strategic activities; demonstration project activities; activities cultivating bureaucratic insiders and advocates; collaborative activities with high-profile elite groups; activities enlisting support from elected officials; lobbying activities; activities attracting media attention and support; and administrative and evaluative activities.⁷

With only highlighting two of these categories, I contend that the NCTE's role in advocating for federal aid to English education corresponded with Kingdon's theories on agenda setting and Roberts and King's categories of action. The NCTE engaged in disseminating activities through distributing literature detailing their policies to

⁶ John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 129-130.

⁷ Nancy Roberts and Paula King, "Policy Entrepreneurs: Their Activity Structure and Function in the Policy Process," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 1, no. 2 (1991): 158-159.

Congressional members, and the NCTE strategically “cultivated bureaucratic insiders” when they worked with Commissioner of Education, Sterling McMurrin to achieve initial funding. Additionally, the NCTE conducted “problem framing” activities to establish the problem of inadequate English education within larger issues of national defense. All of this was able to occur because of the policy window formed by the educational climate in the late 1950s that sought change through federal legislation.

Research Steering

Another research area that connects to this dissertation is the idea of how research can be steered to reflect a particular ideology. One particular area of this research that has been studied extensively is the way that nations and organizations direct research toward what some call the “knowledge-based economy.” This economy values knowledge and technology through its contribution to driving economic interests. Furthermore, this research is typically valued for its problem solving potential. Claiming that a particular type of knowledge, namely literacy and numerical manipulation, drives the pursuit of human capital, these researchers argue that research proposals valuing this type of knowledge are preferred in university settings and ultimately receive more funding. This constricts and compromises freedom in developing research proposals that might run counter to this particular ideology.⁸

Though most of the research that I found on this topic centers on current situations and wider, globalizing trends, there are similarities between this concept and

⁸ Jenny Ozga, Terri Seddon, and Thomas S. Popkewitz, *Education Research and Policy: Steering the Knowledge-Based Economy* (London: Routledge, 2006); Jane Kenway, Elizabeth Bullen, and Simon Robb, “The Knowledge Economy, the Techno-preneur and the Problematic Future of the University,” *Policy Futures in Education* 2, no. 2 (2004); Jenny Ozga, “Knowledge and Policy: Research and Knowledge Transfer,” *Critical Studies in Education* 48, no. 1 (2007).

the ways that the NCTE argued for the inclusion of English within the NDEA. First, there was an analogous general relationship between the NCTE attempting to fit their discourse and rhetoric within the government advocated notion of research. A major point that I investigated was the NCTE shift in its approach to how English should be taught and researched. This shift coincided with the passage of the NDEA. Therefore, this research steering framework provides me with a way to approach this topic by relating ways that organizations seek to fit research advocacy approaches within a wider, preferred context. In this case, it would apply to the NCTE attempting to fit their research proposals within a similar construct as research previously approved by the NDEA. Secondly, on a more specific level, the NCTE's shift in rhetoric aligned with approaches taken by organizations seeking funding for research in a "knowledge-based economy." I contend that during 1950s, Americans had similar notions of knowledge and technology driving economic success, and the NCTE's new research direction reflected this perception. Another aspect was that the NCTE's rhetoric reflected problem-solving research goals as opposed to curiosity-driven goals. In other words, NCTE leaders appealed to congress by claiming they could address specific, problematic deficiencies in the teaching of English. They were not searching for money to guide general research programs, but claimed they could achieve specific goals if they acquired federal funding.

Organizational Boundary Definition

Another topic I investigated was the negative impact that professional organizations can incur in their quest for power and notoriety through redefinition of concepts associated with their field. Mona Gleason argues that psychologists in Canada

during the early and mid-twentieth century helped legitimize and bolster their professional usefulness through promulgating notions of correctness and attributing value to normalcy. Those persons that strayed from this idea could benefit from the services provided by psychologists. Thus, through defining boundaries and disseminating rhetoric that reinforced those boundaries, the profession benefited.⁹

The NCTE engaged in similar boundary definition of relabeling definitions of “English” during the late 1950s. Before this period, debates ranged over the exact definition of English, but through its policies and publications, the NCTE implicitly defined English as broadly encompassing many topics including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. As I document in chapter three, the NCTE shifted their definition to specifically limit the teaching of English a tripod definition of language, literature, and composition. This definition was first suggested by college English professors and reinforced by the College Entrance Examination Board and the Modern Language Associations. Both of these organizations historically supported higher education concerns while the NCTE represented the views of elementary and secondary instructors.

The NCTE’s acceptance of this definition caused problems within the organization. Some called this tripod definition “the unholy trinity,”¹⁰ because of its symbolic connection to the MLA and CEEB. These organizations supported content-centered approaches to education centered on skill-based curriculum. This concept ran counter to some student-centered advocates within the NCTE who preferred

⁹ See Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

¹⁰ G. Robert Carlsen, Interview by Alfred Grommon, November 24, 1978, Box SG-01, p. 21, National Council of Teachers of English Archives.

individualizing curricula to address student differences. Additionally, critics claimed this definition limited the concepts that English could encompass.

Wider Historical Issues in Education

Along with these theoretical backgrounds, I also assert connections between NCTE events and wider historical issues in education. In describing this pattern, I connect the NCTE's initial period to progressive education ideas before embracing the life adjustment movement. This was followed by a shift from student-centered education to a curriculum that emphasized content. Following this, the NCTE altered its focus back to advocating student-centered programs. This change aligned with a broader 1960s focus on the disadvantages children in education.

Within this history, the central issues I connect to NCTE rhetoric are student-centered education the idea of experience in education. Early NCTE policies recommend relevant student experiences within student curricula. The NCTE published curriculum guides that connected to the ideas of progressive educators such as John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick. This perspective continued with the creation and expansion of life adjustment education. Many NCTE authors recommended this movement that claimed connecting education to future adult experiences was most beneficial to students. In the 1950s, the NCTE shifted its recommendations from student-centered curricula to content-centered curricula. Instead of curriculum recommendations based in discovering and fostering relevant student experiences, the NCTE's focus became adjusting student learning to predefined skills it thought all students should possess.

Alongside this idea of experience in education, the systems model highlights additional connections between the NCTE and other educational movements. This model was popularized during WWII as a wartime military method that valued systemic scientific analysis in guiding military strategies. This model transferred into areas of business and education. Its quantifiable analysis method coincided with 1950s American society favoring scientific methods in devising solutions to public policy problems. The creation of the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 1951 and the passage of the NDEA in 1958 reflect the government's preference for systems methods of curriculum planning.

NCTE leaders viewed the government's actions in promoting systems-based education methods as a preference for content-based curriculum. This new perspective shifted NCTE policies away from earlier student-based methods to advocating rigidly defined curricular models, and it also coincided with broader educational movements headed into similar directions. Simultaneously, the American public and many critics advocated a shift from life adjustment education and progressive education. So, NCTE leaders abandoned these earlier educational ideas to fit this notion of educational rhetoric that valued academic content over student interest and ability. These perspectives changed in less than a decade, though, as indicated by the 1966 Anglo-American Conference on English at Dartmouth where NCTE leaders reassessed their opinions. This conference presented viewpoints from British educators who advocated student-centered curriculum model and reintroduced ideas of experience in education to NCTE leaders. These ideas would manifest into student-centered curriculum models during the late 1960s and 1970s.

Student-Centered Education

Throughout this project I detail the NCTE's shift from supporting student-centered education to encouraging a curriculum rooted in content. This concept of the "student" shifted during this time period, but the general emphasis remained defined as considering pedagogical instruction with the abilities and interests of the students and then using the students' background to bridge to the curriculum objectives. This notion differed from using the curriculum or content as the guiding idea and attempting to bring student ability to that level. This concept of student-centered education was the general emphasis during early periods of the NCTE when the organization asserted their independence against the mounting pressures of higher education, and it was also evident in early NCTE works aligned with other progressive education authors. Though the NCTE shifted its support, the elective curriculum of the 1970s and effects of the Dartmouth Conference can also be seen as possessing a student-centered focus, which aligned with an increased 1960s educational focus on the disadvantaged student.

As I explain in the first chapter, the NCTE was formed in 1911 as an organization protesting the strong influence of higher education entrance exams on the secondary curriculum. From the perspective of NCTE leaders, colleges were unfairly asserting their own concept of curriculum onto secondary English teachers. This curriculum was essentially for college bound students and left little for students who did not attend college. Two early NCTE publications outlined their support for non-college bound students through English courses. The first published in 1917, entitled *Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools*, also known as the Hosis Report after its chairman James

Hosic, argued that with increased high school enrollments it was “rapidly becoming a common school”¹¹ with students of mixed ability. In order to reach the entirety of students, the authors claimed, English should focus on experiential learning for students and tie curricular goals to future social goals. This concept of a student-first pedagogy reappeared in 1935 with W. Wilbur Hatfield’s *An Experience Curriculum in English*. In this NCTE publication, Hatfield argued that teachers should adapt literature selections to reflect the academic and interest background of students.¹²

In the 1940s, the life adjustment education movement sought to support those students that typically dropped out of public education. To keep those students more involved, life adjustment supporters advocated a curriculum that more aptly reflected the interests and background of the students. This was similar to progressive education concepts of student-centered education. Again, NCTE publications supported these progressive ideas. As I document in Chapter two, future NCTE president G. Robert Carlsen advocated life adjustment education within the teaching of English and the NCTE’s curriculum guide advocated using student-centered teaching methods.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, wider educational movements shifted toward a discipline-centered advocacy. The focus during this period was the subject itself with the notion that academic rigor should be the basis of education, and the best and brightest were encouraged to rise in education to support the country during Cold War

¹¹ Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools Compiled by James Fleming Hosic Chairman of the National Joint Committee on English Representing the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education of the National Education Association and the National Council of Teachers of English” *Department of the Interior Bureau of Education Bulletin*, no. 2 (1917): 5.

¹² *An Experience Curriculum in English: A Report of a Commission of the National Council of Teachers of English*. W. Wilbur Hatfield Chairman, English Monograph No. 4 (National Council of Teachers of English. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1935).

efforts. During this time, as I argue throughout this work, the NCTE shifted its goals to support this discipline-centered curriculum.

The wider educational landscape changed back to student-centered education during the mid-1960s. This time, the concept of the “student” was more explicitly defined by some in the NCTE as the economically disadvantaged student. In previous eras, the concept of the “student” in student-centered education was the implicitly the non-college bound. This concept was reiterated with the Anglo American Conference at Dartmouth in 1966 where American English educators who widely expressed a content-centered curriculum mindset were met with British educators who argued for a student-centered curriculum. Additionally, NCTE publications reflected this sentiment. During the mid-1960s, the *English Journal* was amassed with articles advocating using English to reach economically disadvantaged students. Ultimately, this shift was expressed in the widely emulated Secondary English Elective Curriculum. Encouraged by life adjustment education advocate and 1961 NCTE president George Robert Carlsen, this movement was created partly as a way to engage students in English. In this case, his view of “students” in student-centered education meant those for whom traditional methods did not reach.

Throughout this work I align NCTE views with “student-centered” or “subject-centered” education. Though the specific experiences of the students differed throughout the twentieth century, the notion that the focus on education should start with the needs and abilities of the students, instead of on the subject, was the binding idea in “student-centered” education.

Experience in Education

Dewey argued that classrooms should provide students with relative experiences. These experiences should build on the background of students' own lives and also provide them with appropriate interactions with their own learning. This perspective views education as connecting to the backgrounds and future experiences of students. It additionally requires adept teachers to guide students through curricular experiences. The students, in Dewey's perspective, should not be left to their own learning opportunities, but instead should be facilitated toward a pre-specified goal.¹³

The same two documents previously mentioned reflect NCTE views on experience, which align with Dewey and student-centered perspectives. James Hosis edited the National Joint Committee on the Reorganization of English in the High School in 1917 and advocated that students should find English curricula relevant and that it should connect to future life experiences. Wilbur Hatfield, an early NCTE leader, claimed similar views of experience in education. Hatfield argued in the 1935 *An Experience Curriculum* that a combination of teacher guidance and appropriate student experiences were most valuable to students.

These ideas were abandoned with the critical education climate of the 1950s. With the public and academic attacks on life adjustment education and progressive education in general, the NCTE shifted its perspective to advocate skill-based curricular ideas. This shift coincided with their attempt to acquire federal funding for the teaching of English. Furthermore, it fit the perspective that the government was searching for

¹³ Nel Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2007): 31-32. For a comprehensive examination of Dewey and education see Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*, 23-42.

academic programs filled with rigor and strictly concerned strictly with raising academic standards.

John Rudolph documented the specifics of these programs in his book *Scientists in the Classroom: The Cold War Reconstruction of American Science Education*. He argued that curriculum reforms in the 1950s and 1960s were patterned after scientific research models popularized during WWII. These models were extremely effective during warfare and elevated the status of scientists allowing them to gain cooperation of the federal government in creating and funding the NSF in 1950. The NSF provided a platform for scientists to enact education reforms for the teaching of science in American schools. Rudolph argued these reforms went beyond changing science classrooms; similar methods of reform spread to other subjects and mapped onto curricula theory throughout the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁴

During WWII scientific research methods changed elements of warfare including individual battles, military techniques, and weaponry. These changes, such as the development of the atomic bomb, were conceived in military funded labs, many at institutes of higher education. This type of scientific research, called operations research, was started by the British military and spurred by the development of radar. With radar technologies, militaries could devise strategies beyond individual attacks; instead they constructed a wider perspective, or system, to win battles with multiple combatants. Additionally, this research went beyond military planning. Scientists, including civilians, were vital in using statistical analysis to develop these broader combat strategies. Writing

¹⁴ John Rudolph, In his book, *Scientists in the Classroom: The Cold War Reconstruction of American Science Education* (New York, Palgrave: 2002).

on the origin of operations research, Robert Lilienfeld, author of *The Rise of Systems*

Theory, and Ideological Analysis detailed the initial expansion of these theories:

As time went on, operations research, in the form of the application of statistical methods to military problems, spread from work on radar systems to the analysis of fighter losses in France, the analysis of aerial bombing raids, the evaluations of weapons and equipment, and to the analysis of specific tactical operations. Foreshadowing its expansion still further, the methods of operations research were addressed to predicting the outcomes of future military operations with a view to influencing policy and to the study of the efficiency of the organizations that deployed equipment and weapons in battle.¹⁵

This was the golden age of science. Science was seen as a solution to many of society's problems and people, including the media, looked toward science to find answers.¹⁶ The inception of the NSF was one example of the importance and increasing perceived relevance of science in 1950s. Initially encouraged by noted scientist Vannevar Bush¹⁷, this organization was established in 1950 after contentious political maneuvering.¹⁸ Some in Congress wanted the organization to be free of governmental oversight and bureaucracy while others saw it as an opportunity to streamline American scientific inquiry into concentrated issues of national importance.¹⁹

¹⁵ Robert Lilienfeld, *The Rise of Systems Theory: An Ideological Analysis*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978: 104.

¹⁶ Rudolph, *Scientists in the Classroom*, 35-38.

¹⁷ Bush was chairman of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, which oversaw the Manhattan Project and contributed to WWII military efforts.

¹⁸ Bush was leader of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, an organization that used operations research methods during WWII.

¹⁹ See Daniel Lee Kleinman, "Layers of Interests, Layers of Influence: Business and the Genesis of the National Science Foundation," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 19, no. 3 (1994): 259-282; Daniel J. Kevles, "The National Science Foundation and the Debate over Postwar Research Policy, 1942-1945: A Political Interpretation of *Science-The Endless Frontier*," *Isis* 68, no. 1 (1977) 5-26.

This period also coincided with concerns and changes over America's educational system. As Rudolph argues, with the election of Eisenhower the focus of the federal government's education strategy was to compete with the educational prowess of the Soviet Union. Of concern was administering a comprehensive education reform to improve the scientific manpower of the nation. Historically, due to concerns of federalism, the federal government limited its role in education policy. Except for land authorized for constructing facilities there were few programs that affected education until the twentieth century and even those were mostly peripheral to direct aid to education until the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.²⁰ In spite of this lesser involvement in education, there were numerous attempts by lobbying interest groups and reform-minded Congressmen to increase a federal presence in local education. The Morrill Act of 1862 gave federal lands to states so that they could establish colleges.²¹ This bill was important because it provided more opportunities for research and education and set a precedent for federal policy in education. This was the route that the federal government used to provide aid for schools. Because of concerns that the federal government was intruding on states' rights, in order for federal education

²⁰ This changed in 1917 with the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917 that authorized \$1.7 million to vocational aid programs for high school students. Specifically, it gave money to prepare teachers, pay teachers, and pay administrators to oversee these programs. See Sidney W. Tiedt, *The Role of the Federal Government in Education*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) 14-32; Frank J. Munger and Richard F. Fenno, *National Politics and Federal Aid to Education* (Syracuse, NY: University Press, 1962) 1-18.

²¹ John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004) 135.

policies to pass most had to sidestep those concerns through building schools, donating land, or just giving money for states to work with.²²

The NSF avoided those concerns by sponsoring a series of summer institutes for training teachers. In doing so, the NSF also placed scientists, instead of educational institutions, in control of designing curriculum and training teachers. The approach used in the summer institutes relied on highly skilled leaders in subject-specific areas to instruct teachers. Scientists, not education faculty, conducted these summer sessions. This value placed on academic accomplishments echoed WWII military strategies that also placed a high regard on the ability of science to conduct military operations.²³

The NSF's summer institutes employed curricular reforms similar to the scientific strategies used by the military during WWII. Foremost, these strategies utilized a systems approach to problem solving. The systems approach was similar to operations research, however it went beyond initial military applications and applied similar research techniques to social issues including urbanization, transportation, and welfare.²⁴ The systems approach meant solving problems by examining a broad range of issues, not just

²² See Tiedt's discussion of the Hoar Bill, Perce Bill, Burnside Bill, and the Blair Bill in Tiedt, *The Role of the Federal Government in Education*, 18-22.

²³ John Rudolph, "From World War to Woods Hole: The Use of Wartime Research Models for Curriculum Reform," *Teachers College Record* 104, no. 2 (2002), 225. Rudolph additionally argues that the systems approach was instrumental in the Woods Hole Conference, also known as the "Study Group on Fundamental Processes in Education" from which Jerome Bruner's highly influential *The Process of Education* was recounted.

²⁴ For examples of the systems approach applied to social issues see David R. Jardini, "Out of the Blue Yonder: The Transfer of Systems Thinking from the Pentagon to the Great Society, 1961-1965," in Agatha C. Hughes and Thomas P. Hughes, eds. *Systems, Experts, and Computers: The Systems Approach in Management and Engineering, World War II and After* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press) 311-357; Ida R. Hoos, *Systems Analysis in Public Policy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1962).

a particular question. It also allowed researchers to consider possible solutions that might lie outside an initial realm presented by a question.²⁵

In describing this systems approach to education, J.J. McPherson, a member of the educational media branch in the U.S. Office of Education wrote in 1960 of three characteristics to this approach. The first was that it should “be in terms of an *ecology of education*” which means “subject areas be related to each other as fully as possible and materials used represent an application of the best knowledge about means of giving an individual the kinds of experiences most likely to result in desired learning.”²⁶ Along with this description of the ecological aspect of a systems approach, McPherson echoed the idea that highly-skilled experts were vital in this type of curriculum reform and that revisions “must include persons who have understanding in such areas as the psychology of learning, the subject matter to be learned, the other fields of knowledge that have important relationships to the primary subject field, and communications media and methods.”²⁷ Second, McPherson argued that a systems approach needs to consider the desired learning objectives and ways to progress students through learning to those desired outcomes. Third, McPherson contended that a systems approach should reexamine its outcome to evaluate its effectiveness. If the system does not work it should be reevaluated until the desired objectives are achieved.

²⁵ For example, in 1950, the U.S. Navy conducted a study called Project Hartwell. This study sought to detect Soviet submarines. Using the systems approach, researchers redefined the issue and argued the broader question was how to effectively conduct overseas transport. See John Rudolph, “From World War to Woods Hole,” 218.

²⁶ J.J. McPherson, “Let’s Look at the Systems Concept of Educational Planning,” *The High School Journal* (1960): 66.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

The NSF obtained congressional funding for their programs by gaining support through documents that expressed the concern of perils that faced America if they fell behind the Soviet Union in science education.²⁸ Rudolph contends that much of the federal financial support given to the NSF during the mid to late 1950s could be traced to the 1955 book *Soviet Professional Manpower* by Nicholas DeWitt. This work, sponsored by the NSF, highlighted differences between American and Soviet education. It claimed Soviet schools were focused more on technology than American schools and because of this, they were increasing their military. Congressional leaders were convinced, through this book, that improving science education was vital to protecting national interests. The NSF's budget increased eightfold from 1955 to 1956.²⁹

This era of science coalesced with unfavorable views of education. As stated earlier, there were rampant attacks on the life adjustment movement including concerns that secondary schools were watering down intellectual curriculum in favor of practical, superfluous courses more focused on student emotions and feelings. This public sentiment allowed for more intellectual pursuits, such as scientific goals, to gain favor.³⁰ As Rudolph stated, "the fact that the professional education establishment was excluded, despite evidence of public support of the functional curricular ideology, demonstrates the overriding influence of both national security and the scientific elite in redefining the school curriculum in the 1950s."³¹

²⁸ Rudolph, *Scientists in the Classroom*, 57-81.

²⁹ Ibid., 74-77.

³⁰ Ibid., 17-31.

³¹ Ibid., 58.

In essence, Rudolph's conception of the systems approach to education provides a lens to view the NCTE's position in the early 1950s and the early 1960s. I argue that the NCTE used rhetoric designed to appeal to the federal government's perspective of the systems education model to secure federal funds. NCTE members testified before Congress that there was a compelling national interest in supporting the teaching of English. In doing so, they played off Cold War fears of America's vulnerability against Communist countries. The funds ultimately acquired went toward Project English, a program established in 1961 and modeled after programs facilitated by the NSF during the 1950s. In their overall strategy, the NCTE sought to strengthen its organization, but in the process abandoned earlier advocacy of student-centered experiences. On face value, these stood in stark contrast to the ideas inherent within the systems approach to education, however in examining the systems approach another way, it does advocate placing students in similar experiential learning opportunities. The students educated in these programs were placed in situations where they acted as professionals within the subjects. Science students acted as scientists through experiential, problem-based learning opportunities. Instead of the NCTE setting up learning opportunities similar to the NSF, their policies advocated curricular rigor through skill-based activities and college preparation.

G. Robert Carlsen, president of the NCTE in 1961 detailed this dichotomy during his 1961-1962 "State of the Profession" address. While attending math and science curriculum meetings he concluded that researchers in those areas "seemed to be moving

in a diametrically opposite direction from English.”³² Instead of establishing frameworks for topics and then teaching students within those boundaries as was professed in English, Carlsen saw these researchers helping students establish and push the boundaries of their fields:

[Math and Science education researchers] seem much more interested in the process or procedure than in exact knowledge; in the development of concepts rather than in the memorization of factual information; in encouraging the child to speculate, probe, arrive at his own processes of thought rather than using methods set up for him. Surprisingly many of these suggestions in these fields smack a great deal of Dewey’s theories of learning through doing.³³

Carlsen argued these other subjects encouraged students to develop creative experiences and English should follow suit. He recounted a story of a math professor who had been “baffled at times by the problems his daughter is asked to solve in fifth grade arithmetic,” and Carlsen admitted himself that he “dare not even help my daughter with the principles of addition because my method puts a strait jacket on her thinking; the one that is being used opens the doors to higher mathematics and the binary system.”³⁴ Newly retooled math and science curriculum asked students to act as scientists and develop their own ideas about those subjects instead of working within those boundaries. Carlsen delineated between English and these other subjects with their respective stances on encouraging creativity. He argued creativity was important, though neglected by many English teachers, and “that other disciplines are acknowledging the indispensability of greater freedom, we are moving toward imposing greater restrictions on the field of

³² G. Robert Carlsen, “The State of the Profession, 1962,” Record Series 99.0040, University of Iowa Archives.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

English.”³⁵ Particularly disturbing to Carlsen were results of a NCTE questionnaire sent out to NCTE designated leaders of English.³⁶ The results indicated a dismissal or criticism of creativity in English. Carlsen felt this was detrimental for English courses and expressed concern that these questionnaire results signaled “a desire to bind individuals rather than to free them.”³⁷

Chapter Summaries

In chapter one, I present the original development of the teaching of English into a modern discipline through examining the impact of the Committee of Ten conference, and college entrance exams. Within this era, I examine the emergence of the NCTE in 1911 as an organization formed to curtail the college influence on secondary English curricula. This original organization intent quickly led to achieving prominence through influencing school curriculum and publishing policy statements on the teaching of English. These perspectives were closely associated with progressive education adherents of the early twentieth century that advocated student-centered experiences within English courses.

In chapter two, I discuss the influence of the NCTE in post-war American education and also examine connections to the wider education movement of life adjustment education. I argue that the NCTE recommended curricula continued to align with progressive education, and specific NCTE authors contributed to life adjustment

³⁵ Ibid., 20.

³⁶ This questionnaire was sent to 232 individuals who were either presidents of NCTE affiliate groups, liaison officers, or those James Squire, Executive Secretary, listed as “leaders in the field of English.” See Carlsen, “The State of the Profession, 1962,” 1-2.

³⁷ Ibid., 22.

education publications that defended the use of relevant classroom experiences through literature that connected to future life and social situations. The movement was heavily criticized and set the stage for public and governmental criticism of student-centered education policies. With the 1957 launch of Sputnik and subsequent 1958 passage of the NDEA, the government shifted its focus to supporting content-centered academic policies.

In chapter three, I detail the NCTE's campaign to achieve federal funding. Emerging from the 1950s with increased finances and more members, the NCTE asserted itself as an organization representing the English profession, and not just the interests of its members. With this greater institutional power, they aligned with their historic rival, the MLA and produced "The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English," in 1959. This document raised questions about the future of English and established the NCTE as an organization willing to compromise with other organizations to achieve greater power and influence in broad, national issues of English. The message within "The Basic Issues" upset some NCTE members who felt the document countered previous NCTE positions including student-centered, progressive philosophies. The NCTE continued to assert itself in national issues and lobbied Congress to include the teaching of English within NDEA reauthorization in 1961. NCTE members testified before Congress and they produced *The National Interest and the Teaching of English*, which linked problems in the teaching of English to widespread national concerns. Though English was left out of the NDEA reauthorization, the Commissioner of Education funded an English research program named Project English.

In chapter four, I conclude 1960s attempts at federal funding and examine a subsequent shift in English back to progressive pedagogical ideas. Project English produced research at universities within the framework reinforced by NCTE policies. These policies favored the expertise of the English professor and devalued the role of the teacher in determining differentiated teaching methods for individual students. The NCTE continued to lobby Congress with additional testimony and another report that linked poor English teaching with national concerns. *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English* was released in 1964 and claimed English teachers were inexperienced and unable to adequately teach with modern research techniques. Its solution was for federally sponsored widespread funding to addressing these concerns. The NDEA was ratified in 1964 to include the teaching of English and many NCTE leaders credited their efforts in achieving this goal. This victory for content-centered advocates was short lived. At the 1966 Anglo American Conference on the Teaching of English at Dartmouth, British participants expressed their concern over the subject-centered methods advocated by the NCTE and produced at Project English centers. They aligned their views more closely with earlier progressive policies and reflected in early twentieth century NCTE publications and policies. This conference along with an increased focus on the individual student within broader national policies and public opinions on disadvantaged children signaled a shift in NCTE rhetoric. I conclude with highlighting the elective curriculum, a popular English teaching technique used during the late 1960s and early 1970s that was similar to student-centered techniques from earlier eras.

CHAPTER ONE

“OF A REPRESENTATIVE AND PERMANENT CHARACTER”: THE ORIGIN OF THE NCTE AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY REFORM IN ENGLISH

In this chapter I present the development of the English discipline from the late 1800s to WWII. During this time, the subject shifted from a conglomeration of topics into a modern discipline with a focus on literature and composition. Simultaneous to this history is the origin and actions of the NCTE. This organization was created in response to a perceived domination of higher education interests implicitly and explicitly dictating the secondary English curriculum. As I will detail in later chapters, the NCTE, though originating within this setting, changed its message throughout the twentieth century, reacting and attempting to influence broader educational and social concerns. Specific to this era though, the NCTE's actions aligned with progressive education movements that favored student-centered educational methods. NCTE authors produced two major publications reflecting these views. The first, *The Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools* was conceived within the reorganization movement of the early twentieth century. This movement sought connections between secondary curricula and relevant social situations. The second document, *An Experience Curriculum in English*, recommended a experiential student-centered learning environment. Both of these texts were vital to the early history of the NCTE because of their collective popularity and

influence. As I will show in later chapters, the NCTE's policy statements and actions during the mid-twentieth century signified an abandonment of these ideas. Instead of moving away from college influences on their curriculum, the NCTE would seek partnerships with organizations and individuals strongly involved with higher education groups that advocated subject-centered curricula.

Nineteenth Century English Curriculum, 1800-1874

The skills taught in the English classroom from 1800-1874 would largely not be emphasized in many secondary English classrooms today. Though there is some continuity in that familiar subjects such as grammar, reading, and speaking have lasted, the majority of goals, skills, and materials have dramatically changed. Applebee argues that during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, ethical, classical, and non-academic ideology typified English instruction.¹ The first, the ethical tradition, was expressed in the primary modes of teaching reading and spelling, *The New England Primer*, Noah Webster's *Blue-Backed Speller*, and McGuffey's Readers. All three of these expressed a nationalistic, protestant viewpoint underlying its teaching methods. As Applebee explains, "The *Primer* spread a common catechism, Webster's [works] advanced a common system of spelling and promoted a chauvinistic nationalism, McGuffey's readers created a literary heritage, even if one based on fragments and précis."²

Another important notion that runs throughout this period is the omission of the intrinsic value of reading. During this era, literature in educational practices was used as a

¹ Arthur N. Applebee, *Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English: A History* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1974), 1.

² Ibid., 5.

vehicle for larger ideas, not for intrinsic pleasure. Reading and writing became useful as subjects because within the wider academic focus on the classical tradition skills in the teaching of English were upheld. For example, oratory and rhetoric were useful in higher education settings for students wishing to pursue the clergy, and the idea of grammar was considered beneficial because its study became justified through an eighteenth century educational goal of promoting mental discipline.³ Monaghan concurs on the importance of reading and writing instruction but claims that during seventeenth and eighteenth century New England, those skills had a utilitarian function as well. Because of reading's connection to religious and political goals, it was taught to all students, but because writing was relegated as an important occupational skill, it was only taught to boys.⁴ English related skills were not only relegated to classroom experiences. There were also purveyors of literature and speaking outside of formal educational settings. For example, debate and literary societies were popular with adolescents.⁵ Furthermore, Salvino argues that in the eighteenth century, literacy became linked to financial success. With reading came the ability to achieve monetary gain in the market economy.⁶

³ Ibid., 6-10

⁴ E. Jennifer Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England," in *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 71.

⁵ Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 12.

⁶ Dana Nelson Salvino, "The Word in Black and White: Ideologies of Race and Literacy in Antebellum America," in *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) 140-153.

Overall, the most popular ones taught in the later half of the nineteenth century were grammar, rhetoric, and composition.⁷ Grammar was especially advocated because of it was associated with developing students' mental acuity. As one preface in a nineteenth century English textbook explained: "A systematic analysis of the English Sentence, should hold a prominent rank, merely as an important means of mental development."⁸ Teaching grammar through formal means, i.e. dictating prescriptive rules through rote memorization, was advocated in the first half of the nineteenth century, as evidenced by this method expressed through popular textbooks.⁹ This began to change in the second half of the century, with the American scholarly acceptance of philology. This movement, based partly on imported German ideas, suggested using grammar as a means to investigate broader subjects, like literature, history, and anthropology. Instead of being an end, the study of grammar could reveal wider information about a culture.¹⁰

Two additional topics taught during the mid-nineteenth century were rhetoric and composition. Along with philology supplanting the study of formal grammar, another topic that filled this vacuum was rhetoric. This area of study was popularized within textbooks and beyond our modern association of rhetoric with argumentation; this nineteenth century category consisted of learning punctuation, diction, and the history of the English language, among other skills.¹¹ Composition, along with rhetoric, became a

⁷ Donald E. Stahl, *A History of the English Curriculum in American High Schools* (Chicago: Lyceum Press, 1965), 21.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*; Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 25-29.

¹¹ Stahl, *A History of the English Curriculum*, 52.

focus of instruction during the later half of the nineteenth century. However, composition was different than modern perspectives on the subject. Writing was not often taught, but it was considered an extension of speaking.¹² As Stahl argues through his analysis of nineteenth century textbooks, within this realm of composition, little student writing actually took place. As dictated by the committed textbook space, more of the students' time was spent learning to analyze sentences and grammatical rules and then to outline others' works. Furthermore, the composition topics that were included often reflected the ethical ideology of nineteenth century education. Some of the topics from popular textbooks were "The Folly of Striving to Please Everyone," "Every Man Is the Architect of His Own Fortune," "The Necessity of Subduing the Passions," and "The Liquor Curse."¹³

Others have also noted the ideological overtones in nineteenth century textbooks. Elson claimed that nineteenth century readers reflected a strand of anti-intellectualism that warned of the corrupting influence that reading novels for pleasure could give oneself.¹⁴ Venezky claims that during the eighteenth century, the content of readers replaced religious notions with secular, nationalistic content. Even though the content shifted, the ideology and fervor changed little.¹⁵ Shannon concurs with Venezky by

¹² David R. Russell, *Writing in the Academic Disciplines: A Curricular History*, 2nd ed. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 3-6.

¹³ Stahl, *A History of the English Curriculum*, 67-68.

¹⁴ Ruth Miller Elson, *Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 230.

¹⁵ Richard L. Venezky, "A History of the American Reading Textbook," *The Elementary School Journal* 87, no. 3 (1987): 261.

claiming nineteenth century readers “represent[ed] the popular moral philosophy of beginning industrialization and increased immigration,” while also including justification for class structures and differentiated gender roles.¹⁶

College Influences, 1873-1911

The keystone moment in discussing shifts in nineteenth century English curriculum is the 1873-1874 Harvard entrance requirements:

English Composition: Each candidate will be required to write a short English composition, correct in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression, the subject to be taken from such works of standard authors as shall be announced from time to time. The subject for 1874 will be taken from the following works: Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Merchant of Venice*; Goldsmith’s *Vicar of Wakefield*; Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, and *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.¹⁷

Before 1874, students were required to read aloud from works of literature, making this new policy a marked shift in college entrance policies. Prior to this catalog change, the study of literature was not often the subject of composition, but this development shifted this notion. Now literature would be used a means for composition. But more importantly, its knowledge would be required for college entrance. Following Harvard’s change, other institutions followed requiring literary works of their own.¹⁸

¹⁶ Patrick Shannon, *Broken Promises: Reading Instruction in Twentieth-Century America* (Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1989), 7.

¹⁷ Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 30.

¹⁸ Ibid.; Russell, *Writing in the Academic Disciplines*, 49-51. In some ways, these selections can be attributed to a revolution of books during the eighteenth century. Kaestle, summarizing secondary literature on the topic, argues that advancements in commercial printing increased the number of books, which increased the number of readers. This conversely increased the need for more reading materials, thus continuing a cycle.¹⁸ Along with books generally being more popular, the works selected by Harvard were especially fashionable. Even so, they also represented a move toward ascribing an elitist connotation to culture. Levine, claims that Shakespeare was enjoyed across the classes, but not until the late nineteenth century did his plays, along with other art forms deemed high culture, become codified as restrictive to the upper class.¹⁸ So, one can argue that this selection of literature for the Harvard entrance exams was another example of popular literature becoming relegated to exclusive institutions. See Carl F. Kaestle, *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading Since 1880* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 52;

The Origin of the National Council of Teachers of English

Formed in 1911 as a group breaking away from the NEA, the NCTE's early political agenda was centered on redefining the relationship between secondary English instruction and higher education. Throughout the early twentieth century the NCTE advocated student-centered education and supported an agenda that represented the needs of the teachers. This perspective would be further realized with the NCTE's implicit support of the life adjustment education movement. However, in the 1950s, they would sever their ties with this movement. Responding to criticism of the movement and culminating with the launch of Sputnik they abandoned these earlier ideas in favor of a more rigorous, academic-oriented curriculum. Though this redefinition of the NCTE during the 1950s will be the subject of future sections, this chapter will set the stage for those arguments presenting initial NCTE ties to early twentieth century education movements.

In describing the NCTE, I first detail its inception as an organization developed to provide a voice and organization for English teachers joined against a perceived domination of secondary English curriculum by college entrance examinations. After forming a collaborative voice, the NCTE worked to produce many influential publications on the teaching of English. Two reports discussed in this chapter are *The Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools* and *An Experience Curriculum in English*.

Wadsworth further claims that book publishers influenced nineteenth century notions of childhood through their popular portrayals of youth. Thus, instead of a work like *Huckleberry Finn* reflecting social patterns of eighteenth century childhood, it actually created and defined new notions. See Sarah Wadsworth, *In the Company of Books: Literature and its "Classes" in Nineteenth-Century America* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 193.

The change in Harvard entrance examinations had a direct influence on the NCTE's origin. As mentioned previously, before 1874, students were required to orally read from works of literature, making this new policy a change. High schools and preparatory academies, whose success in part was judged on their ability to send students to prestigious colleges, reacted by instituting these required college titles into their curriculum. This signaled the beginning of what some considered college-dominated secondary curriculum. If secondary students were accepted to higher education institutions, schools would naturally have to instruct its students with publications appearing on college lists. Along with this perceived push of college institutions onto their curriculum, another problem was a lack of standard titles colleges would select. Consequently, to keep pace with college entrance examinations, high schools included a vast array of works that might be chosen from year to year. This issue represented another level of subjugation. Having one list would have been difficult enough; it was even harder to adjust curricula to match different titles each year. The secondary schools demanded a solution and within the next decade, associations made up of colleges and high school representatives, along with the larger organizations of the College Entrance Examination Board and the North Central Association met and approved a recommended list of titles.¹⁹

This period of college domination did not last forever: the overall mood shifted from higher education dictates and more closely to secondary instructors exercising their own power in determining skills and goals in the English classroom. James Fleming

¹⁹ Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 31; See also, Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School 1880-1920* (Madison, WI: University Press, 1969): 362-364.

Hosic, chairman of the National Education Association (NEA) Committee on College-Entrance Requirements, and first Secretary-Treasurer of the NCTE claimed that this “period was one of storm and stress in secondary education” because secondary English teachers were unorganized and “had no means of collective expression.” As the number of public schools grew, Hosic argued that secondary institutions opened opportunities for lower class students to attend higher education institutions. Other options were needed. Consequently there was a need for “policies...that would serve the needs of the great majority of teachers rather than a small minority found mainly in private schools.”²⁰

An increased sense of professionalism between English teachers helped this movement. The early twentieth century saw a solidification of the English discipline in schools, due in part to the earlier mentioned influence of the 1973-1974 Harvard Entrance Examinations. Concurrent to these developments was a spread of books and professional articles on the teaching of English that helped to unify ideas of English between teachers. This movement also spawned regional English organizations that communicated ideas between educators.²¹

These organizations were more apt to act on concerns over the perceived college domination of secondary English curricula and ultimately, this would result in the development of the NCTE in 1911. This organization broke away from the National Education Association to greater assume advantage against the college domination in

²⁰ James F. Hosic “The National Council After Twenty Years,” *The English Journal* 21, no 2 (1932): 108.

²¹ Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 45-46.

secondary English curriculum.²² Thomas Pollock, NCTE president in 1948, argued that NCTE traces its roots in “Midwestern teachers who thought the entrance examinations in English at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, and the resultant required reading lists in the schools were too restrictive.”²³ Early NCTE documents reflect Pollock’s argument. In the first issue of *The English Journal*, the first official publication of the NCTE, the organization’s inception was recounted. Initially, the organization started through “The English Round Table” a committee within the NEA. This committee appointed an additional committee within the “Round Table” to specifically consider the high school-college articulation issue. This group, known as the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements in English sent out questionnaires to English teachers and heard back from over seven hundred of them. The questions were set up in three sections: 1) The Influence of the Uniform College Entrance Requirements in English upon the High School, 2) The High-School Course in English, and 3) Entrance to College, covered many areas of teaching English, and received a diverse selection of responses. As reviewed in the first issue of *The English Journal*, the committee realized there was a need to organize all of this input and form a national organization of English teachers. This concern translated into a resolution passed on July 12, 1911 “calling upon the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements to take the initiative in forming a national society of teachers of English of a representative and permanent character.”²⁴

²² Robert S. Fay, “The Reorganization Movement in Secondary English Teaching,” *The English Journal* 68, no. 4 (1979): 46-53.

²³ Thomas C. Pollock, “The Profession in Perspective: Two Reminiscences of the NCTE,” *The English Journal* 66, no. 4 (1977): 8.

²⁴ “The National Council of Teachers of English: Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting,” *The English Journal* 1, no. 1 (1912): 30.

One of the earliest concerns of the organization was to provide an avenue for effective communication between English teachers across the county. The NCTE founders felt that this would overcome the disorganization discovered after sending the initial questionnaires. As an example of this concern, a correspondence describing the first NCTE national meeting noted intentions to create a more representative system of communication. Specifically, the newly founded organization wanted to provide a way for educators to communicate and ultimately “improve the conditions surrounding English work.”²⁵

The NCTE’s initial mission was severing higher education control over secondary institution curriculum. This was central enough to the NCTE that its first meeting was chronicled as concentrating on the issue of high school-college articulation. In estimates of “about sixty-five delegates” in attendance, “the spirit throughout [the first meeting] was one of intense earnestness.” Though many topics were discussed, the major issue was the influence on college entrance exams. The adopted resolution on this issue sought secondary educators’ representation on the National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements.²⁶ After this initial resolution, Ernest Clark, representing East High School in Rochester New York, proposed a resolution establishing a college entrance exam. Though this proposal, as Clark suggested, was previously adopted by the New York State Association of English Teachers, and seemingly well intended to reflect the desires of

²⁵ Ibid., 30-31.

²⁶ The resolution read: *Resolved*, That the Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English be directed to request the proper officers of the organizations represented in the National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements to include in the several delegations an adequate number of representatives from the public high schools. See Ibid., 36.

high school English teachers instead of the best interests of colleges, “animated discussion followed.” As recounted in the initial *English Journal*, though the discussion might have been lively, ultimately “the matter was finally referred to the Board of Directors for action, with the understanding that the Council must not be made to appear favorable to an examination system of entrance to college.”²⁷

The Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools

There were many changes happening in education at the very beginning of the twentieth century. Child centered educational advocates such as G. Stanley Hall argued that educational methods should be relevant to students interests and aligned with individual cognitive ability. Others extended this idea of student educational interests onto the social relevancy of schools through stressing vocational education or courses designed to help students learn and achieve success in specific occupational fields. These recommendations were a shift from high school courses dominated by college entrance requirements that focused on students acquiring a pre-established set of academic skills.²⁸

Along with child-centered advocates who argued for bringing relevant student interests into the classroom, John Dewey asserted the value of experience in education. From his perspective, experiences in education should be meaningful and connect to students’ prior knowledge. Students should interact with their learning, not only because this interaction would increase their interest, but it would also, according to Dewey, help students to make meaning of their education. Additionally, education should build experiences on students’ prior knowledge and connect lessons to future learning

²⁷ Ibid., 37

²⁸ Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 54-60.

activities. In other words, education experiences should not be held in isolation, but within a broader context of educational goals.²⁹

Aligning themselves with wider educational changes during the 1910s the NEA established committees to examine secondary education. This group, named the Reviewing Committee of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education consisted of representatives in fourteen subjects including English, mathematics, and agriculture. In 1918, it reported its findings in the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*.³⁰ This document argued for a greater connection between school and students' lives. Its widely cited list of recommended school topics included "1. Health. 2. Command of fundamental processes. 3. Worth home-membership. 4. Vocation. 5. Citizenship. 6. Worth Use of Leisure. 7. Ethical character."³¹

Within this NEA Commission was the English committee, named the National Joint Committee on the Reorganization of English in the High School.³² James Hosis

²⁹ Nel Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2007): 31-32. For a comprehensive examination of Dewey and education see Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*, 23-42.

³⁰ The complete list of subjects included agriculture, art education, business education, classical languages, English, household arts, industrial arts, mathematics, modern languages, music, physical education, sciences, and social studies. See U.S. Bureau of Education, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education: A Report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education Appointed by the National Education Association* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 6.

³¹ Ibid. This report differed starkly from the Committee of Ten report issued in 1892. On one level, the committee that produced the *Cardinal Principles* mostly consisted of educators whose professional areas were secondary schools, unlike the Committee of Ten that was formed mostly of academic instructors from higher education institutions. Additionally, the *Cardinal Principles* considered education as a vehicle to adjust students to future life goals. This notion countered the Committee of Ten report that ended its recommendations with its outline of secondary courses. See Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945-1980* (New York: Basic, 1983): 47-49; Herbert Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995) 95-99.

³² For a comprehensive examination of this committee see, J.N. Hook, *A Long Way Together: A Personal View of the NCTE's First Sixty-Seven Years* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1979): 37-48.

chaired this committee, and its subsequent 1917 report, known as the Hosis report, reflected the movement of educational reorganization and sought a new way of organizing and teaching English. In its preface, Hosis outlined the report's overall thoughts of English education and stressed the need to end college influenced English curricula. He claimed that as high schools were accepting a wider population of students, or more "common" as he indicates, English courses should not be solely designed as college preparation:

The high school is rapidly becoming a common school. That is what it was first planned to be, and that is what the people seem now determined to make it. From that point of view the folly of insisting that the high-school course in English shall be a college-preparatory course is evident. Nor will it answer to bring forward the shop warm plea that what best prepares for college best prepares for life. There is too much skepticism as to the value of much of present-day college work to warrant this.³³

This report was primarily instructional and meant to change instructional methods for the better. In describing the current state of English courses, Hosis rallied against "monotonous and unintelligent uniformity," and wanted to provide interesting lessons that would engage learners. Specifically, he claimed "the presentation of the attempts of some of the more enterprising teachers to work out courses adapted to the needs of the pupils will prove a helpful stimulus and example to many others."³⁴

Considering Hosis's earlier work and in helping to found the NCTE, it is no surprise that his report indicted college's influence on secondary English curricula. Hosis boldly claimed "college-preparatory work in English has never prepared for college"

³³ "Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools Compiled by James Fleming Hosis Chairman of the National Joint Committee on English Representing the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education of the National Education Association and the National Council of Teachers of English—Department of the Interior Bureau of Education Bulletin" (1917): 5.

³⁴ Ibid., 7.

because college instructors “freely confess that they make no attempt to base their courses upon what the high schools are supposed to have done.” In other words, even if high schools had partaken in fulfilling their end of articulation agreements, it might have gone to waste if college professors did not take those agreements into account when designing their courses. Furthermore, Hosis claimed that relying solely on a college preparatory curriculum caused more harm because “boys and girls brought up in high schools free from the domination of college-entrance ideal very frequently surpass their classmates who were carefully pointed toward the college examination.”³⁵

The report claimed that pedagogical methods should be rooted in experience in order to make courses meaningful for students. This would also prevent the unfair, unrealistic connection to college courses. Further claiming “the entire doctrine of ‘preparation’ for higher institutions is fallacious,” Hosis argued that “the best preparation for anything is real effort and experience in the present.”³⁶ Along with this concept of experience, Hosis argued that college preparatory curriculum was not addressing the needs of most students. He considered it superfluous and excess to students not attending college. In order to address those students, English curricula should instill students with a set of future, functional skills because “most of the graduates of the high school go, not into a higher institution, but into “life.” Hence the course in English should be organized with reference to basic personal and social needs rather than with reference to college-entrance requirements.”³⁷

³⁵ Ibid., 5.

³⁶ Ibid., 5.

³⁷ Ibid., 20.

Hosic's report represented similar ideas found within the Cardinal Principles report, because he considered these functional, life skills vital to the students within the English curriculum. Hosic argued that "it should be the purpose of every English teacher" to encourage student creativity, develop moral reasoning skills, teach how to use reading as appropriate forms of leisure, and use English language skills in their own lives:

Stated broadly, it should be the purpose of every English teacher, first, to quicken the spirit and kindle the imagination of his pupils, open up to them the potential significance and beauty of life, and develop habits of weighing and judging human conduct and of turning to books for entertainment, instruction, and inspiration as the hours of leisure may permit; second to supply the pupils with an effective tool of thought and of expression for use in their public and private life, i.e. the best command of language which, under the circumstances, can be given to them.³⁸

As another example of the Hosic report reflecting the social goals within the Cardinal Principles, the report declared two important goals in teaching English. First, the material should be organized to supply a connection between student experiences. Second, the course should be interesting to students. In terms of the first point, the section entitled "The Organization of the English Course," advocated adapting skills and materials to students. This was not to be achieved by completely extinguishing previous forms of teaching. In fact, Hosic claimed that "the committee recognizes, moreover, the value of systemized knowledge in the case of grammar, spelling, rhetoric, literary forms, history of literary production and the like" were valid if the instructor taught with "genuine constructive activities." However, he called this type of learning "subsidiary" to true knowledge and argued that "it should not, therefore, be made the chief basis for the organization of the course or for standards of attainment to be set up from semester to

³⁸ Ibid., 30.

semester.” Hosic claimed that establishing an English class this way was inferior to promoting connections between course goals and student experiences because “the relating of knowledge to the pupil’s daily experience is more important than the relating of these items to each other in his memory.”³⁹

In spite of this connection to earlier methods, Hosic acknowledged the focus of this report was to produce an English course that was useful to student success later in life. He did not seek to address this through teaching traditional methods for the sake of tradition, but on the contrary, Hosic stated “there is a pressing need to exclude from the English course irrelevant and comparatively unimportant material.” By unimportant, Hosic aimed at material “admitted merely because it is thought valuable by society at large,” because the committee thought it was more important to include material that “must also prove valuable to the pupil at the time he deals with it, and valuable for the same reason that others have found it valuable.”⁴⁰

The progressive education movement has been divided by historians into two primary groups: administrative progressives and pedagogical progressives. While both were advocating a change of education from previous years and traditional methods, there were distinct differences between the two. Broadly, administrative progressives were commonly associated with quantitative testing and efficiency as two strands of education that were necessary to develop better schools. Pedagogical progressives, on the other hand, argued for student-centered education programs. Tyack defines administrative progressives as reformers who sought educational change through a

³⁹ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 33-34.

diversified, bureaucratic, centralized model. They recommended that educational issues be left in the hands of experts who, through specialized education and testing, could recommend proper scientific reform efforts. This movement was especially notable in cities where large urban districts were responsible for educating many different cultural and ethnic groups of students including swells of immigrant populations.⁴¹

Administrative progressive education models were overall successful in replicating their methods and structure to other districts through the twentieth century. With the turn of the twentieth century, school populations climbed. Tyack credits this with increased focus on dangers of child labor and effective compulsory education laws. This increase in school population increased differentiated curriculum demand for specialized areas of education including academic tracks for students with varying abilities including special needs. Overseeing this spread of differentiated instruction was specialized administrative teams including layers of assistant principals and supervisors at district and school levels who ensured the success of their bureaucratic structures, while underlying this movement was the notion that scientific principles were contributing to the success of these programs. These principles were reflected in scientific data such as surveys that guided district level decisions and student performance measures, such as intelligence tests, that informed school level decisions.⁴²

In terms of reorganization for administrative progressive reforms, English was considered a valuable topic, and the NCTE maneuvered its goals to align with

⁴¹ David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974): 192-196.

⁴² Ibid.

administrative progressive reformers. Applebee argues that within administrative progressive reform, English fared well. They were protected from economic cutback considerations because the subject was inexpensive to teach. Additionally, language was considered a major skill needed for adults.⁴³ The NCTE responded to this emphasis on essential skills through adopting a committee to study the functional aspects of English. Led by John M. Clapp, the Committee on the Place and Function of English in American Life collected survey data over the English skills that were useful in adult society. What the survey found, and what the committee ultimately recommended, was that in order to provide a better link between functional skills and the English curriculum, schools should spend more time teaching social skills. Literature was left out of the interests of this committee; it was not considered an essential adult activity. Because of this, Applebee claimed literature was omitted from these functional reforms. Applebee additionally framed NCTE's push for conducting research into this topic as a means to silence its critics through developing an amicable policy. In spite of this reframing of the purpose of English, the NCTE ignored literature, even though this was a major topic within the discipline.⁴⁴

Historians place pedagogical progressive as an opposing group within the dualistic typology of progressive education. Similar to administrative progressives, pedagogical progressives also sought change in education. Broadly, they felt that traditional methods of education were incompatible with changes and increased student

⁴³ Ibid., 84.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 86. As I will discuss in later sections, the NCTE would use this method of appealing to the critics in order to fight for the usefulness of its subject.

populations. Counter to administrative progressives, they advocated student-centered methods of reforms including pedagogical methods such as alternative assignments and student choice in developing individualized areas of instruction.⁴⁵ Pedagogical progressive methods were influenced by the philosophies of John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, and other reformers who advocated increased freedom and democracy in the classroom.⁴⁶ These ideas would both coincide with the next major publication from the NCTE during the twentieth century, *An Experience Curriculum in English*.

An Experience Curriculum in English

As the 1930s progressed, the NCTE quickly gained success tackling educational policy issues and offering statements on the importance of English and recommended directions. It also created school curriculum guides and by the 1920 convention, it was announced that one of their reports was widely used by city and states as a “foundation of their courses.”⁴⁷ Specifically, NCTE ideas continued with a consistent push of progressive education views with some ideas repeating across eras. One publication that reflected the spirit and advocacy of the NCTE during this time was *An Experience Curriculum in English*.

⁴⁵ Tyack, *The One Best System*, 196-197.

⁴⁶ Though commonly associated with the student-centered movement, Dewey fought being labeled as such. See Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991): 500-510; Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 108-109.

⁴⁷ Edward Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School 1880-1920*, 364-368; William Davis, 1925 president of an NCTE subcouncil referred to the NCTE as “the most influential organization of teachers of a particular subject in the curriculum of schools and colleges that we have had perhaps in the history of American education. Not only has it had enormous influence on the teaching of English, but it also has pointed the way for teachers of other various subjects to co-operative professional improvement.” See, William R. Davis, “Ten Years of Co-operative Effort,” *The English Journal* 14, no. 10 (1925).

An Experience Curriculum, published in 1935, was the first large-scale curriculum program conceived and published independently by the NCTE. The previous document was the Hosis Report, but that publication was a joint production between the NCTE and NEA, so this work was solely from the perspective of NCTE members.⁴⁸ This curriculum program was heavily influenced by Hosis's report and was an extension of the progressive education mindset the NCTE possessed during the early twentieth century. Hosis served on the committee that produced *An Experience Curriculum*, so his influence was surely present in developing the thesis of the work. More directly, Hatfield credited Hosis's report as influencing *An Experience Curriculum*. He claimed in the preface that "Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools" was notable because it "urged that high-school curricula and teaching methods be adapted to the needs of the great mass of the pupils rather than to preparation of a few for entrance to college." This student-centered educational concept, according to Hatfield, "went quite as far toward our present experience-curriculum ideal as any considerable number were then willing to follow."⁴⁹

The basic premise of *An Experience Curriculum* was that schools should prepare students for life. In order to achieve this, the curriculum should be designed to provide

⁴⁸ J.N. Hook compared curriculum making to mountain climbing: "In actuality, curricular progress is more accurately comparable to a mob's attempt to climb a huge, steep, icy hill in consistently unsettled weather. The members of the mob are all well intentioned, but they work at cross-purposes, pull one another back, occasionally engage in verbal fisticuffs....New generations, with new visions, attempt the ascent, and other winds push against them and fresh ice and snow slow their climb. But they do manage to shape another ledge or two for themselves or for the next generation." He then argued that the Reorganization Report of 1917 was done by "ledge-makers." See Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 111.

⁴⁹ *An Experience Curriculum in English: A Report of a Commission of the National Council of Teachers of English*. W. Wilbur Hatfield Chairman, English Monograph No. 4 (National Council of Teachers of English. New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1935): ix.

students with relevant learning experiences. These experiences in turn would help students become successful as adults when encountering similar situations. Hatfield contended that everyone learns best through experiences. Therefore, a school that could duplicate adult experiences and teach students how to navigate through them would be most successful in producing students ready for society. Hatfield claimed this type of education was most vital to contemporary life that required adults to be able to encounter various situations:

The school of experience is the only one which will develop the flexibility and power of self-direction requisite for successful living in our age of swift industrial, social, and economic change. To inculcate authoritarian beliefs, fixed rules of conduct, unreasoned and therefore stubborn attitudes, is to set our youth in futile and fatal conflict with the forces of modern life. By meeting situations, modifying conditions and adapting themselves to the unchangeable, our boys and girls will learn to live in a dynamic and evolving world. Today, more than ever, the curriculum should consist of experiences.⁵⁰

Similar to the Hosis report, *An Experience Curriculum* also outlined pedagogical strategies that reflected structured teaching strategies combined with individual experiential learning. Hatfield argued that though there are programs that attempted to address his concepts by providing education through experience in the form of integrated units or correlated disciplines, such as combining historical lessons about the surrounding time period of a novel's setting, these programs often relied on intellectual activities to guide experiences. Furthermore, including intellectual activities was necessary, more familiar to teachers, and could help make experiences more relevant. Of necessity, though was giving students experiences. Ultimately, a combination is needed:

On the other hand the academic exercises in spelling, using effective detail in narrative, noting the effect of the similes in *Sohrab and Rustum* are, if not interwoven with these emotional, volitional threads of life, just so much woof

⁵⁰ Ibid., 3.

without any warp, sure to fall to pieces the moment our grasp is relaxed. *The school must manage a functional combination of the dynamic experiences of active life and the intellectual activities which have been teachers' chief concern.*⁵¹

Hatfield additionally claimed that the purpose of teaching literature was to facilitate student experiences: through literature and with literature. In terms of the former, students should learn to fully experience interactions with literature. In illustrating this idea, Hatfield stated “the experiences through literature are the ultimate objective. The author’s sensory and social experiences, his imaginings, and his feelings are what he has tried to put into his writing, and they are what the reader wishes to get.”⁵² For this to occur, teachers should select literature titles that reflect the age, reading level, and interests of students so that they “should be given experiences that have intrinsic worth for [them] now.”⁵³ Students should also have experiences with literature. By this, Hatfield described varied techniques such as silent reading, group reading, and discussion, across multiple works to provide students with a diverse learning experience. This multitude of teaching styles were recommended in order to give students skill and an appreciation for different types of reading situations they might encounter in later years.

Conclusion

Summing up this era of initial change in the English discipline, it is clear to see the progression of ideas within the NCTE as it pertained to broader issues in educational history. The shift within the secondary English discipline to a course primarily concerned

⁵¹ Ibid., 12.

⁵² Ibid., 17. Additionally, Hatfield included moving examples from Tennyson, Housman, and Stevenson to illustrate the idea that “The intrinsic worth of such experiences is the only valid reason for the reading of literature.”

⁵³ Ibid., 18.

with reading and composition was initiated and sustained by college entrance examinations. As the NCTE reacted to this initial dominance of higher education entrance requirements on secondary English through voicing their opposition, it also sought unification among English teachers and aligned its views with progressive education theorists and movements.

Of particular importance was the notion of experience in education. Similar to the ideas of Dewey, NCTE authors advocated pedagogical opportunities that mirrored future adult experiences. Two key documents expressed NCTE perspectives on this topic. The first, the Hosic Report was within broader reorganization reports produced by the NEA and detailed the importance of education connected to future adult situations. It placed the English classroom as able to facilitate functional topics through such examples as reading during appropriate moments of leisure and communicating English effectively in social and professional situations. The second document, *An Experience Curriculum* by Wilbur Hatfield, structured its argument from similar ideas within the Hosic Report. It placed primary value on experience as a tool in English classrooms to adequately prepare students for adult life and endorsed literature as a means to connect prior student experiences to future adult situations. These experiences were to be outlined by educators, but they should be flexible to encourage discovery within students.

The NCTE based their earlier history on leading these charges and asserting these philosophies with both Hosic and Hatfield revered in future NCTE texts. In the next chapter I detail additional teaching techniques advocated by NCTE members including those from the life adjustment education movement, a student-centered education aligned with progressive education and endorsed by the federal government. During the late

1950s, Life adjustment education encountered severe disapproval from public and academic audiences over its perceived neglect of scholastic classroom activities in favor of superfluous, social lessons. Because of its support of the movement, the NCTE incurred similar attacks, however instead of directly confronting this criticism, NCTE leaders compromised its progressive tradition and shifted to represent a subject-centered, academic focus.

CHAPTER TWO

“UNREALIZED POTENTIALITIES”: THE NCTE IN POST-WAR AMERICA:

1942-1958

In this chapter, I continue detailing the history of the NCTE in the early twentieth century. This chapter specifically examines the NCTE's actions in post-WWII America. Initially, NCTE officials felt slighted when the government omitted the teaching of English from its WWII Victory Corps program. This program highlighted necessary disciplines to the war effort and English was left out. This aspect and others caused the NCTE to worry about the future of the discipline, and to counter these feelings they released publications affirming their role in American society. Additionally, WWII coincided with a general poor state of education. Many teachers left the profession to join the war effort while others left because of the low pay. Furthermore, the high school drop out rate was high. One solution offered by the federal government was life adjustment education. This education, with a student-centered curriculum focus, became popular, and its message resonated within the NCTE.

The primary focus of this chapter is the role of the NCTE within the life adjustment education movement and their subsequent response to its criticism. Life adjustment education was an outgrowth of the progressive education movement and sought to link educational with social goals. In some ways it was a continuation of the

Cardinal Principles, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, advocated educational experiences that connected classroom activities to psychological and social goals. NCTE members were joined with the life adjustment education movement through implicit and explicit connections. Implicitly, the ideas of the NCTE had developed in similar ways that reflected the spirit of the life adjustment education movement: they argued through policies and publication progressive educational goals that valued experiential learning through individualized, relevant classroom activities that connected to students' future social lives. Explicitly, NCTE members would write within Life Adjustment Education publications tying the goals of Life Adjustment Education with the teaching of English. In this section, I show examples of how the NCTE was connected with the Chicago Public Schools curriculum guide, which was heavily infused with life adjustment education rhetoric. Additionally, I examine how the NCTE suffered similar criticism that life adjustment faced in the mid-1950s.

Post-War NCTE

At the beginning of WWII, English teachers were positioned with a shifting view of the importance of their discipline. Though the earlier decades of the twentieth century saw the development of the unique English subject in American schools, shifting viewpoints inside and outside of the school caused the NCTE to redefine its purpose in supporting its organization. J.N. Hook identified three main issues that affected English teachers during WWII. First, there was a need to justify the teaching of English. Other subjects had a more obvious connection to the war effort, but English was not seen as essential. For example, the teaching of industrial arts could be justified in helping to increase production of necessary military materials or to replace industries affected by

enlisted workers by training students to assume their positions. Second, some teachers thought “every teacher-any teacher-should and could be a teacher of English.”¹ This lessened the unique qualifications of English instructors and made some administrators reconsider the value of English classes. Along with this point, some schools combined the teaching of English with social studies courses, so there were fears from some English instructors that their discipline would meld with the social studies curriculum and cease to be an autonomous course. Third, there were no clear goals for the English discipline. In consideration of curriculum recommendations from *An Experience Curriculum*, Hook claimed that one NCTE influential member argued its message was “valuable [but] proving fuzzy and sometimes unworkable in direct curricular and classroom application.”² In other words, though the message resonated with members, its classroom practicality was dubious.

Additionally, the English discipline was left out of government recognition of vital wartime subjects. In 1943, the United States Office of Education created a group called the Victory Corps to aid schools to prepare students for wartime. English was largely left out of the planning. To counter these sentiments, the NCTE appealed to the leaders of the Victory Corps and Commissioner of Education John Studebaker in a letter that argued the importance of English in the war effort. The argument was convincing.

¹ Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 131.

² Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 132. In a 1942 address, NCTE second vice-president Marion Sheridan summed up the fallen status of English by claiming “English has had a favored place in the curriculum. Several forces might seem to operate to deprive it of that position; for example, fused or integrated courses, the present concentration upon mathematics, physics, and training for industry.” See Marion Sheridan, “The Role of the English Teacher in Wartime,” *The English Journal* 31, 10, 728.

Later that year, Studebaker wrote an addendum to the original Victory Corps manual and claimed that English was an important subject for servicemen during wartime.³

The NCTE further countered these sentiments with a series of documents that argued for English's value during wartime. The most prominent publication, entitled "Basic Aims for English Instruction in American Schools," listed thirteen of such points.⁴ Considering the concern in the profession, as previously cited by Hook, these points read as a professional organization fighting for the validity of its subject.

One theme of this publication was the attempt to link English with the war effort. Three goals explicitly place English instruction with notions of democracy or American ideals. These goals claimed that communication was important in order to foster "free thought and discussion"⁵ and discern truth in spite of propaganda efforts. Another point positioned the American spirit within in literature selections. This was not to downplay the role of other nations' contributions to literature, instead the point argued for a common heritage through literature so that students "may grasp something of the ideals

³ See David A. England, "With Grammar on My Left: English Teaching and the Second World War," *The English Journal* 68, no. 4 (1979): 67-68.

⁴ The thirteen points were: (1) Language is a basic instrument in the maintenance of the democratic way of life; (2) Increasingly free and effective interchange of ideas is vital to life in a democracy; (3) Language study in the schools must be based on the language needs of living; (4) Language ability expands with the individual's experience; (5) English enriches personal living and deepens understanding of social relationships; (6) English uses literature of both past and present to illumine the contemporary scene; (7) Among the nations represented in the program of literature, America should receive major emphasis; (8) A study of the motion picture and radio is indispensable in the English program; (9) The goals of instruction in English are, in the main, the same for all young people, but the heights to be attained in achieving any one of them and the materials used for the purpose will vary with individual needs; (10) The development of social understanding through literature requires reading materials within the comprehension, the social intelligence, and the emotional range of the pupils whose lives they are expected to influence; (11) English pervades the life and work of the school; (12) English enriches personality by providing experience of intrinsic worth for the individual; (13) Teachers with specialized training are needed for effective instruction in the language arts. See, Basic Aims Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English, "Basic Aims for English Instruction in American Schools," *The English Journal* 31, no. 1 (1942).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

which prompted the founding of this nation, the spirit of its leaders, and the meaning of the heritage which is theirs.”⁶

An additional theme was the overall social usefulness of the discipline. As stated earlier, the subject of English was fighting for relevance and the continuation of their discipline as an autonomous course completely separate from social studies. This theme of social usefulness conceptualized a modern use for English as a helpful aid in developing and maintaining successful adult relationships. English courses could teach students appropriate communication skills “to converse, to carry on informal discussion in small groups or committee, or to share personal experiences”⁷ and other situations valued in social settings. Literature also presented students with a broader illustration of their world. Through stories, the report claimed, students experienced values and cultures different from their own. Additionally, literature explained the past while enabling a vision of the future: it allowed students to ascertain their current world through examining newspapers, magazines, and literature, and reading into the thoughts and aspirations of previous writers helped give students an idea of where society should advance. The report claimed that “insight into the present is the ultimate goal—insight in terms of a growing concept of the good life, by means of which the direction of the future may be determined.”⁸

A final theme was the importance of trained professionals who are experienced in the discipline. This definition of training did not completely translate to a highly

⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁷ Ibid., 43.

⁸ Ibid., 46.

intellectual instructor, but the emphasis in this report was to fill classrooms with teachers who were “cultured, sensitive human beings [who] must themselves be the product of teaching which puts social awareness and the attainment of social insights above mere knowledge of literary history and the literary technique....”⁹ Along with this notion that teachers should be prepared to relate English to wider social issues in a sensitive way, the report further argued that teachers should be psychologically prepared to work with adolescents in order to “understand young people, their potentialities, their limitations, and adopt a sympathetic attitude toward their problems.”¹⁰ This humanistic quality was reinforced through the report’s conclusion that the ultimate quality of literature teachers was that “they must be capable, by reason of their own knowledge and appreciation of the world of books, to communicate to their pupils the joy of reading.”¹¹

These notions aligned with progressive education notions of non-traditional teachers who taught individual students as autonomous learners through a student-centered focus. Instead of the rote, traditional manner that progressive education attempted to separate from, these authors representing the viewpoints of the NCTE during WWII sought a student-centered focus that could adapt to the individual learning styles of students and encourage student growth. All of this was to be completed in a socially useful curriculum that possessed a solid connection to real world experiences. This recommended teaching style placed the foremost educator qualities as caring,

⁹ Ibid., 54.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

psychological understandings of students and downplayed the academic background of the instructor.

Life Adjustment Education, 1945-1950

During the early 1940s, the American education system was in a perceived state of crisis. With the outbreak of WWII, many teachers had left to join more lucrative military positions. As the war ended, some feared that many of those same teachers who left would return because of low teacher salaries. States were forced to issue emergency certificates to make up for the teacher shortage. Many attributed the poor numbers to the relative low status of teachers as compared to the salaries of other professions. Outside of teacher shortages, there were other causes for alarm. Students were dropping out of school at high rates, and juvenile delinquency fears were rampant.¹² These fears affected educators but in different ways. Some were concerned that New Deal education programs assumed greater control over education that was previously relegated to schools. The relative low salary prompted teaching unions to petition state and federal governments for higher pay. In terms of the dropout problems, some educators anticipated programs to keep students interested in school enough to keep them enrolled in school.

It was in this environment that the life adjustment movement was born. Schools, communities, and government officials were looking for a way to deal with their education problems and the life adjustment movement gave some an initial hope to change education for the better. Life adjustment education supporters achieved modest success in professing the importance of their teaching methods in schools across the country, but the life adjustment movement faced harsh criticism, faded out, and became

¹² See I.L. Kandel, *The Impact of the War Upon American Education* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1948) 55-66.

synonymous with an out of touch, unnecessary educational model. As I will argue in the next chapter, the NCTE had a history of aligning itself with life adjustment education ideals, but following the passage of the NDEA, the NCTE shifted its rhetoric toward a content centered model that would continue in NCTE policies and publications into the 1960s.

As reported in the July 6th, 1946, edition of *The New York Times*, Dr. Ralph McDonald, secretary for the National Education Association (NEA) department of higher education, argued at the annual NEA convention for greater support for teachers. Citing “half as many student entering the profession in 1946 as there were in 1941,” he claimed that Americans do not value teachers as evidenced by low salaries and little public support of education. As an illustration of discrepancy in federal spending toward education he argued:

We spend twice as much to educate a raiser of pigs in a professional school of agriculture as we spend to educate a teacher of children in a teachers’ college. The Federal Government gives a large amount of money to the States every year to help in professional education of the pig farmer but not one cent to aid in the professional education of the teacher of children.¹³

Newspaper reports that described a crisis in education were not unusual in the 1940s. There were rampant concerns nationwide that because of low teacher salaries a teaching shortage would adversely affect American schools.¹⁴ *The Chicago Tribune* reported in 1943 that in spite of qualified teachers, teacher shortages would close many

¹³ Benjamin Fine, “Educators Warned of Teacher Decline,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 1946.

¹⁴ *The Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that the superintendent of schools in Hays, KS solved this crisis because “with each contract sent to a prospective teacher he offered two pairs of nylon stockings to each woman and one pair to the wife of each male instructor upon their arrival in Hays. It worked, and Hays has a full roster of teachers ready for the opening of school.” See “Nylons End the Teacher Shortage in Kansas Town,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 26, 1946.

Illinois schools because teachers were leaving for other higher-paying professions. The *Anniston Star* of Anniston, Alabama wrote that the average teacher made less than unskilled and semi-skilled workers and cited research that claimed in New York City “starting salaries for teachers range from 1,608 for the elementary grades and \$2,148 for high schools...[while] it was found that bartenders in the lowest grade bars began at \$2600 yearly.”¹⁵ The Covina *Argus-Citizen* of Covina California argued that the with the minimum yearly salary for public school teachers of \$1800, “janitors wouldn’t work for that wage. Neither would fry cooks or day laborers or dish-washers. That is why only 400 elementary school teachers are being graduated out of California’s teacher-training institutions this year.”¹⁶

Outside of teacher shortages and low pay there was another looming crisis of education: teenage dropouts. Some reformers felt that outdated teaching methods were the reason. Commissioner of Education, John Studebaker wrote in 1947 that “about two-fifths of the pupils who enter grade nine drop out before they graduate from high school,” and those students left because they were bored with the curriculum.¹⁷ Dr. William Wallin, Chancellor of the New York Board of Regents agreed claiming “nearly one-half of the pupils who enter our school drop out before graduating from high schools,” and argued it was because schools did not meet the needs of students.¹⁸ A reporter for the Los Angeles Times summed up research on the issue: “the great majority of adolescents

¹⁵ Editorial, “Teachers’ Salaries,” *The Anniston Star*, Nov 22, 1946.

¹⁶ Editorial, “Our Crisis in Education,” *The Covina Argus-Citizen*, May 24, 1946.

¹⁷ John W. Studebaker, “Education in Review,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1947.

¹⁸ Benjamin Fine, “Education in Review,” *New York Times*, February 5, 1950.

who leave school do so because they are bored and unhappy,”¹⁹ while an east coast counterpart concluded “all too often, the high school education is unrealistic, fragmentary and does not serve the needs of young men and women. Plainly some action is needed to make the high schools appeal to all pupils, not merely a few.”²⁰

This was the situation of post-war American education. Reporters and educators declared the problems as a crisis and sought solutions. The NEA was particularly vocal about the low pay and social status of teachers. Their frequently quoted arguments spread concerns of the education crisis to newspapers across the country. This served two purposes. Generally, they sought to improve inequities in the profession. This was something for which they historically fought for, and during the 1930s and 1940s they argued for Congressional bills to improve teacher pay.²¹ Vociferously extolling the dangers of low-teacher pay, teaching shortages, and school dropouts could only help their cause. As the NEA fought for legislative action to correct inequities in pay, other educators sought to correct the dropout issue through adapting teaching methods. In particular, they attempted to make school more interesting to students not typically interested in school.

In 1945, the Commissioner of Education John Studebaker organized a series of conferences to study the role of vocational education in post-war American schools. Dr. Charles A. Prosser, a veteran lobbyist of vocational education claimed that the majority of students’ educational needs went unmet. The college-bound students, whom he

¹⁹ Jack Harrison Pollack, “Why Kids Quit School,” *Los Angeles Times*, August, 14, 1949.

²⁰ Benjamin Fine, “Education in Review,” *New York Times*, October 22, 1950.

²¹ For more about the NEA’s legislative battle and their inability to influence Congress to pass general education aid bills see Gilbert E. Smith, *The Limits of Reform, Politics and Federal Aid to Education 1937-1950* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982).

estimated at twenty percent, were adequately prepared through the high school curriculum. Another twenty percent, the vocational education students, were prepared to enter the work force. Conversely, the other sixty percent of students, those not in the college preparation curriculum or those prepared to enter the work force, were not adequately educated:

It is the belief of this conference that, with the aid of this report in final form, the vocational school of a community will be able better to prepare twenty per cent of its youth of secondary school age for entrance upon desirable skilled occupations; and that the high school will continue to prepare twenty per cent of its students for entrance to college. We do not believe that the remaining sixty per cent of our youth of secondary-school age will receive the life adjustment training they need and to which they are entitled as American citizens—unless and until the administrators of public education, with the assistance of the vocational education leaders, formulate a comparable program for this group.²²

Prosser was a major voice in vocational education and his perspective on its future would resonate with American educators.²³ This statement, known as the Prosser Resolution accomplished many things. First, it named a movement in education—Life Adjustment Education, which from 1945 until the mid 1950s influenced educational thought and practice.²⁴ Second, it would spawn a series of conferences planned by Commissioner Studebaker and the Director of the Division of Secondary Education and

²² U.S. Office of Education, *Life Adjustment Education for Every Youth* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, n.d.) 15. Ravitch detailed this statement as happening because “no one seemed to have any good ideas, and then the chairman of the meeting asked Charles Prosser” his opinion. The aforementioned quote ensued. See Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade*, 64.

²³ Prosser was the director of the Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis Minnesota, an industrial arts institution, and an instrumental supporter of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 that allowed federal funds toward vocational education. See Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 212-213, 122-124; and Dorothy Elizabeth Broder, “Life Adjustment Education: An Historical Study of a Program of the United States Office of Education, 1945-1954” (PhD diss., Teachers College, Columbia University 1976), 89-101.

²⁴ Not all attendees initially supported the name “life adjustment education.” Some felt the name inadequately represented the goals of the organization. For an outline of this argument and later debates over the figures Prosser used in his resolution, see Broder, “Life Adjustment Education,” 62-69.

the Division of Vocational Education. This planning resulted in five regional conferences in 1946 attended by representatives of varying levels of state and local education who agreed that school was unable to meet the needs of students and a more comprehensive program was needed. These agreements formed the philosophical basis of life adjustment education.²⁵

Following these regional conferences, a national conference was held that recommended forming a broader national commission.²⁶ The conference was considered a success and its supporters felt a great deal of enthusiasm over its future. Reflecting on such feelings and the overall importance of the life adjustment movement Prosser concluded the conference with a dramatic, fervent call claiming that the conference was vitally important and necessary:

We have been talking here these past few days about all our hopes for the years ahead. Never in all the history of education has there been such a meeting as this one in which you have participated so loyally, so faithfully, and with such great productivity. Never was there such a meeting where people were so sincere in their belief that this was the golden opportunity to do something that would give

²⁵ In all there were nine points of agreement: (1) That secondary education today is failing to provide adequately and properly for the life adjustment of perhaps a major fraction of the persons of secondary school age; (2) that public opinion can be created to support the movement to provide appropriate life adjustment education for these youth; (3) that the solution is to be found in the provision of educational experiences based on the diverse individual needs of youth of secondary-school age; (4) that a broadened viewpoint and a genuine desire to serve all youth is needed on the part of teachers and of those who plan the curriculums of teacher-training institutions; (5) that local resources must be utilized in every community to a degree as yet achieved only in a few places; (6) that functional experiences in the areas of practical arts, home and family life, health and physical fitness, and civic competence are basic in any program designed to meet the needs of youth today; (7) that a supervised program of work experience is a “must” for the youth with whom the Resolution is concerned; (8) that one of the principal barriers to the achievement of the ideals of the Resolution is the multiplicity of small, understaffed and underfinanced schools districts in this Nation; (9) that an intimate, comprehensive, and continuous program of guidance and pupil personnel services must constitute the basis on which any efforts to provide life adjustment education must rest. See U.S. Office of Education, *Life Adjustment Education for Every Youth*, 17.

²⁶ In 1947, Commissioner Studebaker organized the Commission on Life Adjustment Education for Secondary School Youth from national organizations and government education agencies, see Raymond W. Gregory, “The Program of Life-Adjustment Education on the National Level,” *NAASP Bulletin* 35 (1951): 168.

to all American youth their educational heritage so long denied. What you have planned is worth fighting for—it is worth dying for....

I am proud to have lived long enough to see my fellow schoolmen design a plan which will aid in achieving for every youth an education truly adjusted for life. You dare not rest the case now, however. We have no proof that this plan will “deliver the goods.” We must prove it by the work of the institutions we expect to establish for consummating our dream. Yes, it is a dream—man’s big dream. If we go all the way back to primitive man and follow him down through the ages, he has always had this grand dream, dimly seen before him. That you will bring its realization into the bright light of today and tomorrow I have no doubt. God Bless You All!²⁷

The conferences continued and in 1950, the Second Commission on Life Adjustment Education for Secondary Youth was appointed. Following its three-year term, it reflected on the movement’s short history, researched the movement’s use, and considered its future. It claimed the First Commission was notable in two areas “(1) It existed to promote action and (2) it was a joint effort of vocational and general educators.”²⁸ As to the actual use of life adjustment education, the commission reported “that more than 20,000 local teachers and administrators participated in workshops and conferences sponsored by State committees during the years 1951, 1952, and 1953. Each year these activities were carried on in as many as 20 States.”²⁹ Furthermore, the report claimed “29 states have specifically organized campaigns or programs to effect improvements of the types generally associated with life adjustment education.”³⁰

Overall, the report contended that the committee did not think all of the life adjustment programs were successful, but they generally agreed that education was

²⁷ U.S. Office of Education, *Life Adjustment Education for Every Youth*, 22.

²⁸ “Factors Involved in Curriculum Changes,” *Congressional Digest* 37, no. 8-9 (1958): 200.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

better. Specifically, the report detailed changes made in school organization and listed six “Emerging Developments in Secondary Education:” (1) The Comprehensive High School, (2) Characteristics of the Changing Classroom, (3) School Services, (4) Evaluation, (5) Democratic School Administration, and (6) Wider School-Community Relationships. Of these six the first two dealt with curricular issues while the second four concentrated on issues outside of classroom situations.³¹ These “emerging developments” highlighted life adjustment education’s impact on education. The first two contended that changes were happening within academic offerings. The commission presented research that showed schools expanded to include multiple tracks for differing student interest. Instead of a city having individualized high schools that corresponded to specific life goals, as in college preparation or a particular vocation, in many areas those schools had coalesced into one. Another “emerging development” determined many schools changed teaching methods and curriculum. In terms of the former, students were less subjugated to rote learning methods as teachers taught through newer, more relevant methods. As examples of the latter, topics from a current events class were frequently discussed in social studies classes, and English classes were not limited to traditional studies but could include journalism and drama. Some student activities, such as journalism or choir, which had previously been relegated to outside the classroom were available for students to take during school hours. One more important point offered by the Commission was that student coursework reflected the individual needs of students. For example, families and students could sit down together and plan out the student’s course schedule to best fit that

³¹ U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *A Look Ahead in Secondary Education* (Washington D.C. United States Printing Office, 1954), 77-84.

student's individual needs. This was a shift from earlier educational programs and noted in the claim of the commission that "flexibility, freedom, and a recognition of individual differences have been substituted for rigid patterns of courses designed to achieve standards of academic or vocational specialization"³² The other "emerging trends" examined changing educational patterns outside of academic issues. The report claimed expanded high school services including health teachers and guidance counselors. It also identified testing used for non-academic means such as career inventories or to gauge student interest in courses. Additionally school decision-making was increasingly viewed as a joint agreement between teachers, principals, and students. The report claimed student councils were indicative of this trend because they illustrated students working with adults to solve school problems. Finally, the report argued there were new interactions with schools and communities.

The commission further argued their mission was incomplete and still faced problems in education. In looking ahead to vital issues in secondary education the report argued for twelve areas of "unfinished business." These goals expressed the overall life adjustment education call of keeping students in school through relevant, individualized curricula while also reaching out to the community.³³ Following this list, the committee

³² "Factors Involved in Curriculum Changes," 224.

³³ The noted goals were (1) The secondary school staffs need to continue their studies of all youth, but especially those now tending to drop out before graduation; (2) educators are working to establish a 14-year sequence of educational experiences which will eliminate the selective character of secondary education; (3) in terms of time allotment, an appropriate balance between required and elective subjects or areas of learning has not been adequately determined; (4) continued experimentation is needed to provide for greater individualization in instruction by a wide range of methods; (5) there is need for more experimentation to build a program of work experience; (6) an adequate program for appraising the educational development of individual pupils needs to be developed; (7) secondary school teachers and principals have a contribution to make toward improving programs of teacher preparation; (8) the problem of school finance remains critical even after the adoption of State equalization programs; (9) the whole question of home-community-school responsibility should be reexamined. See U.S. Department of Health,

issued its dire prediction that without a “change in public support,” many students would not receive an adequate education. Instead they would receive “little more than custodial care from mediocre teachers lacking in initiative, intelligence, insight, and imagination.”³⁴

As evidenced by the reports of the committee, the life adjustment movement had many supporters within the education profession. One large organization that offered support was the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASSP) whose journal, the *NASSP Bulletin*, published numerous articles supporting life adjustment education.³⁵ In the 1951 edition of the *NASSP Bulletin*, Raymond Gregory, the Assistant Commissioner for Vocational Education presented a history of the life adjustment education movement as a comprehensive, all-encompassing educational phenomenon that could accomplish many goals. For example, the movement “recognize[d] the importance of fundamental skills since citizens in a democracy must be able to compute, to read, to write, to listen, and to speak effectively,” but he also claimed “it is concerned with ethical and moral living and with physical, mental and emotional health.” In speaking for the importance of teaching history he phrased its importance through measuring its relevant usefulness to the present. He wrote “that many events of importance happened a long

Education, and Welfare, *A Look Ahead in Secondary Education*, 84-91. Most of these areas are not detailed beyond the self-explanatory title, such as (1), (3), and (5); but (2) and (9) require more detail. In (2), the commission argued for an investigation of a fourteen-year sequence starting at kindergarten and progressing through junior college, or the first two years of college. They claimed that such an investigation “would be designed to help children and youth to live in contemporary American society.” In (9), the commission claimed that schools have done more “responsibilities,” but they can’t do everything: the home needs to do more. This seems to answer critics of life adjustment education who thought the movement was attempting to take the place of family roles. See, *Ibid*.

³⁴ U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *A Look Ahead in Secondary Education*, 91.

³⁵ Broder, “Life Adjustment Education,” 145.

time ago but holds that the real significance of these events is in their bearing upon life of today.”³⁶ Gregory concluded his summation of life adjustment education’s brief history with an ardent look to the future. He argued that its ideas had gained ground and “taken a hold upon the hearts and minds of leaders in education....”³⁷

Another vocal supporter of life adjustment education was Benjamin C. Willis. Willis was the chairman of the First Commission on Life Adjustment Education and superintendent of the school system in Buffalo, New York.³⁸ Willis’ perspective is important because it placed the support of the movement within an influential administrator. In arguing for the movement he challenged notions that life adjustment education was only suitable for a small proportion of students and not needed for all students, especially highly academic ones. He justified this because of the individualized nature attributed to the life adjustment education: students had diverse needs and must be treated as individuals. Because life adjustment goals could pertain to all students, “those who are trying to achieve life adjustment education must be concerned with ALL youth.”³⁹ Willis also issued dire predictions if life adjustment education was not supported. He claimed that due to a low proportion of enrolled high school aged students, poor consequences would result for society:

Should we be concerned that approximately one-third as many marriages broke up as took place during the past year; or, that such a small per cent of our total

³⁶ Raymond W. Gregory, “The Program of Life Adjustment Education on the National Level,” *NAASP Bulletin* 35, (1951): 169.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

³⁸ Willis became Chicago Public Schools in 1953 and advocated life adjustment education within the English curriculum.

³⁹ Benjamin Willis, “Life Adjustment Education for Youth,” *NAASP Bulletin*, 33 (1945): 95.

eligible voters go to the polls on Election Day notwithstanding the fact that we are one of the last free nations of the world?⁴⁰

Unlike Willis who actively worked in schools as an administrator, Harl Douglass, another life adjustment education advocate, was a professor of education at the University of Colorado and a prolific author. His major work, *Education for Life Adjustment: Its Meaning and Implementation* comprised a collection of authors' viewpoints on incorporating life adjustment education into classrooms. In his preface, Douglass stated the intentions to be used as a guide for students studying life adjustment and educational policymakers.⁴¹ Though, Douglass only contributed to one chapter, "Breaking with the Past," that, as indicated by the title, explained the movement as connected to but a splinter of previous education movements, in this important summary of the book, he connected life adjustment education to *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, which he claimed was "an epoch-making document" and also "a significant break with the past" of previous education ideas. Though the Cardinal Principles did not result in numerous changes, Douglass claimed many aspects of American life had changed and this necessitated new types of education.⁴²

English in The Life Adjustment Education Movement, 1950-1954

Recently in an English classroom a crippled girl, realizing for the first time in her life that she was permanently different from her fellow students, read Baker's whimsical autobiography, *Out on a Limb*, the story of an amputee. The girl wrote

⁴⁰ Ibid., 101. Robert Hampel argues that life adjustment education was a reaction to low student enrollment during the 1940s. See Hampel, *The Last Little Citadel: American High Schools Since 1940* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986): 46.

⁴¹ Harl Douglass, *Education for Life Adjustment: Its Meaning and Implementation* (New York, Ronald Press: 1950): vi.

⁴² Ibid., 28-32. Douglass listed 45 changes in American life including changes in the government, home, business, and media.

hesitatingly, “I liked this book because it helped me understand myself. It gave me a lot of answers to give people who keep asking what is wrong with me.” A sophomore boy wrote about his climbing a mountain behind the town where he lived. After describing the experience, he started to grapple with the problem of explaining why the experience meant something to him. He said that on that mountain he was above everyone else. There were only the sky and the stars above him, the lights of all humanity and could communicate with his fellow beings through the fire he had lighted on the mountain top. Through the process of writing, this sophomore came to grips with the real feelings that had made his experience significant.⁴³

So began the chapter devoted to the teaching of English in Douglass’ *Education for Life Adjustment*. This chapter, beginning with the heading “Unrealized Potentialities of English Instruction” sought to correct problems within English curricula by making the subject more connected to the needs of the students. Its author, George Robert Carlsen,⁴⁴ stressed this notion throughout the chapter as not only a means of utility or to gain student interest but also because educational research supported these ideas.⁴⁵ In examining this chapter, two themes stand out. First, the subject of English was uniquely positioned as being able to reach a deeper connection with students. Carlsen contended “the subject matter of English deals almost exclusively with the personal and intimate aspects of the student’s reaction to literature and his attempt to express himself and to communicate with this fellow human beings.”⁴⁶ He further argued “it is relatively

⁴³ George Robert Carlsen, “Education for Life Adjustment Through English,” in *Education for Life Adjustment: Its Meaning and Implementation*, ed. Harl Douglass (New York: Ronald Press, 1950), 88.

⁴⁴ Throughout his career, George Robert Carlsen published articles under different names including “Robert Carlsen” and “G. Robert Carlsen.” I have attempted to be consistent with the original publication information while also stressing the works are from the same author.

⁴⁵ This chapter is divided into six sections, the aforementioned “Unrealized Potentialities,” “Generalizations Based on Scientific Investigations,” “Basic Experiences in Language,” “Basic Experiences in Literature,” “Redirecting the Traditional Course of Study,” and “Newer Methods of Organization.” These sections are followed by nine questions labeled “Problems for Study, Investigation, and Discussion.”

⁴⁶ Carlsen, “Education for Life Adjustment Through English,” 88.

significant that many English teachers ultimately become the counselors and personnel workers of the schools, because the very nature of their subject, if well taught, leads them to a real concern with the problems of the individual.”⁴⁷ The second major theme was that typical methods of teaching English were inadequate. They failed to meet the needs of students, and these poor methods countered conclusions reached by educational research. In considering this theme, Carlsen detailed inadequacies of teaching prescriptive grammar in isolation because of research that argued over the inability of grammar drills to change actual speech patterns in adults. Carlsen also addressed needs to select literature based on the interests and reading levels of students instead of on “the classics which are traditionally taught in high school [and] are beyond the reading level and the experiential maturity of the average secondary school student.”⁴⁸ This idea corresponded to the life adjustment education tenet of individualizing student curricula.

As I will discuss later in this chapter, life adjustment education literature was attacked for its uneducated tone. Some argued its classroom suggestions were non-academic and inadequately educated students. Due to this perception, it is important to consider how critics might have responded to life adjustment classroom instructional texts. One part in Carlsen’s chapter that might have seemed non-academic was his section entitled “Basic Experiences in Language.” In this section, Carlsen detailed five “important basic principles” that “should be taught to all boys and girls if they are to

⁴⁷ Ibid., 89.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 91.

develop into successful individuals in a democracy.”⁴⁹ Of the five, two read farthest from academic rigor. The first, entitled “Letter Writing and Discussion,” and the second phrased “Interviewing as a Common Activity.” Though these topics might seem trivial, misguided and counter to the traditions in an academic setting, Carlsen promoted their practicality. In his explanation on letter writing, Carlsen related the skill to organizing and succinctly expressing one’s thoughts. He argued “the ability to ask for information, to give instructions, to impart information, to receive complaints graciously, to carry on a conversation are important oral skills demanded by our society.” This portrayal goes beyond polite notes to relatives or other leisurely writings, but its heading unfortunately might have obscured the importance and utility Carlsen attempted to express.

“Interviewing as a Common Activity” was another heading that at first glance seemed to be suggesting a minor activity elevated to a higher academic position. Carlsen contended “the teacher should plan a program in which the student is frequently asked to obtain information from strangers.”⁵⁰ He warned that teachers would not need to plan “an extended unit”⁵¹ on the topic, however he stressed that this type of activity was educationally valid.

NCTE Executive Secretary J.N. Hook claimed that though English was linked to life adjustment education, not everyone in the NCTE supported its views. He argued that though life adjustment education espoused a similar message to NCTE views in earlier

⁴⁹ Ibid., 92. Carlsen additionally argued that “these understanding cut across all the areas of education: home and family life, personal development, civic responsibility, and vocational competence that are of concern in the Life Adjustment movement. They are different from the usual English activities of drilling on parts of speech and items of usage, or of reading certain set classics of literature.” See Ibid., 92-93.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 95.

⁵¹ Ibid.

decades, “most NCTE members” taught English as the subject without using it as a way to teach exterior issues. He argued that this viewpoint went against the life adjustment perspectives to “teach literature and composition for their possible contributions to such youthful concerns as getting along with one’s family, dating, making friends, and developing one’s personality or to the more adult concern of getting and keeping a job.”

This is not to say that some members did not support the ideas. Carlsen was not alone with his perspective on English within the life adjustment movement. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) outlined similar viewpoints in their 1952 work *The English Language Arts*. This work detailed their perspective on the purpose of English from primary grades to graduate school along with suggestions on methods and practice. These positions aligned itself with the life adjustment movement through similar ideas and language. In the first chapter, under the heading “Educating All American Youth,” the authors stressed the life adjustment emphasized method of individualized instruction by claiming that “each [child] as an individual has a right to the cultivation of his peculiar talents and the pursuit of his personal plans.”⁵² Later in the work, the NCTE outlined the main reasons for education as “(1) cultivation of satisfying and wholesome personal lives, (2) development of social sensitivity and effective participation in the life of the local community, the nation, and the world, and (3) preparation for vocational competence.”⁵³ All of these ideas link to the overall framework of life adjustment

⁵² The Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English, *The English Language Arts* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1952), 3-4. The title of this section is very similar to the influential life adjustment education book, *Education for All American Youth*. The same work from which the Carlsen chapter appeared. Carlsen would later serve as president of the NCTE from 1961-1962.

⁵³ Ibid., 6-7.

education because of their support of educating students beyond classroom issues into wider social and adult situations.

The English Language Arts was part of a broader curriculum publication movement started by the NCTE in 1945. Then, the NCTE appointed a commission to study the place of English in post WWII America.⁵⁴ This was established because of the increasingly perceived need of communication in “modern life” and “in the face of ever-present criticism of the teaching of English.”⁵⁵ Within the report of this commission, *The English Language Arts: The Commission on the English Curriculum*, the two guiding principles in developing an English curriculum were stated as first, “language power as an integral part of all growth,”⁵⁶ and second, “development of language power in a social situation.”⁵⁷ The first principle contended that students cannot all perform on a prescribed level, but instead personal growth was different for all students. The second principle stressed the importance of developing language curricula to reflect useful skills. The report reasoned that in order for students to actively grasp these ideas, they must practice using these skills in practical situations:

Language power...is the ability to think and to act in the right way at the right moment, and is developed only through a long series of experiences in trying to act the appropriate way in a similar situation....Makers of a good curriculum in

⁵⁴ Hook claimed that this commission was divided on its connection to life adjustment education ideas. The college instructor, Porter Perrin from University of Washington disagreed and this led to the delay in publishing of the first volume. Furthermore, many in higher education disliked the term “language arts.” See Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 146-147.

⁵⁵ The Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English, *The English Language Arts* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1952), vii.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

the language arts must seek out the kinds of situation in which people actually speak, listen, write, and read outside the classroom....⁵⁸

Within the recommendations on curriculum, the report recommended more unconventional subjects including listening skills, handwriting, and mass communication. These were followed with more familiar topics of composition, grammar, and reading. In many respects, these ideas reflected the earlier mentioned tenets of the life adjustment movement. English was particularly adaptable to these ideas because their curriculum could incorporate many different skills including reading, communication, and writing.

Along with *The English Language Arts*, the NCTE's curriculum commission produced other works that aligned with life adjustment education. In *Language Arts for Today's Children*, published in 1954, the authors stressed the importance of interpersonal relationships and linked social activities as guides for learning by claiming that "conversation and, in much smaller degree, letter-writing are the basic language activities through which these interpersonal relationships are achieved."⁵⁹ In *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School*, published in 1956, the NCTE curriculum commission presented the historical importance of the trend away from college-dominated curriculum and implicitly argued on the shift toward progressive education and the life adjustment movement. It claimed that in previous years "college entrance requirements" dictated curriculum, but "the last two or three decades have seen significant efforts to consider the

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹The Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English, *Language Arts for Today's Children* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1954) 5.

preparation of all students, whether bound for college or not, for the demands of the world outside the school.”⁶⁰

During the 1950s, the NCTE published many school curriculum guides. In the *Teaching Guide for the Language Arts: Preschool Through Junior College*, the Chicago Public School System outlined their Life Adjustment Education influenced curricula that listed the NCTE as providing research for its production. Benjamin Willis, former chairman of the Commission on Life Adjustment Education for Secondary School Youth was superintendent and wrote his forward with similar recommendations as in his LAE report. Willis explained that the guide represented an important bridge between life adjustment education theory and concrete practice in schools and that “the teaching-learning program which it outlines is based on systemic studies of the communication experiences of daily living...and it directly relates extra-class, home, and community learning experiences to the classwork of the pupils.”⁶¹

This structure of forming a curriculum around the “studies of the communication experiences of daily living” permeates throughout the guide with grade level lessons based on relating the material to community and family life.⁶² One way that this guide illustrated that idea was within its lessons that included ways in which language arts skills could be accentuated through extra-curricular, home, and community relationships. For

⁶⁰ The Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English, *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956) 442.

⁶¹ “Teaching Guide for the Language Arts” (Chicago Public Schools [1954?]), iii. The date is estimated at 1954 based on the research of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee library that houses this publication.

⁶² This notion is related to CPS’ structure of curricula around what they refer to in this publication as the “total educational program.” This program consists of “nine major functions of living” including “American Citizenship, communication, economic competence, family living, health, human relationships, leisure, spiritual and aesthetic needs, and vocational responsibilities.” See “Teaching Guide,” 2-3.

example, under the ninth grade language arts standards, one reading goal is that a student “plans an independent reading program.” This is then recommended to be supplemented with the home through “adding books to the home library” and then with the community to “using public library facilities.”⁶³ The guide also included examples of integrated units. These units were meant to serve as an example for how language arts could meld with instruction in other courses. For the secondary level there are integrative units based on newspaper skills, and for the fifth grade, there is a unit entitled “Using the Telephone Correctly and Courteously.”⁶⁴ The idea of including a lesson on using the telephone aligns with the previous discussion of the overall goals of the life adjustment influenced CPS curriculum: it was based in social situations of the student and it related to daily living communication experiences.

Life Adjustment Education Criticism

In spite of this support from the government, its committee, educators and noted use of its courses, the life adjustment education movement collapsed under a powerful wave of criticism. Detractors rallied against this movement because they considered it anti-intellectual and unnecessary. By the end of the 1950s, many Americans considered the movement synonymous with frivolous coursework. Arthur Bestor was one of the most vociferous critics of life adjustment education. In his influential critique of life adjustment education, *Educational Wastelands*, Bestor argued that students who did not find interest in a subject-centered, academic curriculum would still be resistant to a life adjustment curriculum:

⁶³ Ibid., 52-53.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 36. Carlsen also discussed using the telephone, but he gave no justification for its importance.

I find it hard to believe, moreover, that a student who is indifferent to school will recognize as a personal, compelling, “real-life” need the “problem of making one’s self a well-informed and sensitive ‘citizen of the world.’” If he sees no practical point in history, geography, arithmetic, and grammar, is he going to rush back to school filled with a burning desire for sensitivity and world citizenship?⁶⁵

In attacking life adjustment education, Bestor also critiqued what he termed as “professional educationalists.” Making up this group were “professors of education in universities, colleges, and normal schools...superintendents, principals, and other local public school administrators and supervisors....officials, ‘experts,’ and other bureaucrats in the state departments of public instruction and the federal Office of Education.”⁶⁶ Together, Bestor claimed, they formed “an interlocking public school directorate” that controlled state education agendas, determined curricula, and set educational policy.⁶⁷

Bestor concluded his analysis on the problems of the education profession with a scathing criticism linking his concept of the “interlocking public school directorate” with 1950s fears of communism. Portraying his criticism as crusading against the evils of “educationalists.” He argued that life adjustment education, and the effects of progressive education in general, were anti-science and anti-learning. At stake was the intellectual

⁶⁵ Arthur Bestor, *Educational Wastelands: The Retreat from Learning in Our Public Schools*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, IL: University Press, 1988), 92.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 102.

⁶⁷ Bestor claimed that teachers could seek to go beyond this negative power, but were largely ineffective against it: “Though large numbers of able teachers oppose the anti-intellectual trend in education that is so obvious today, they are powerless to do anything about it. The educational directorate has seen to that. It does the hiring and firing, and it knows how to check thereby the expression of critical opinions....The public has been led to believe that the educational philosophy now guiding the public schools is a philosophy to which the teachers and the scholars of the nation willingly subscribe. Actually, however, the voice which the citizen hears in favor of programs like ‘life-adjustment’ education is the voice neither of the classroom teacher nor of the scholar. It is the voice of the professor of education or one of his allies in the public school directorate.” See Ibid., 120-121. Broder presents evidence that Bestor was initially upset at the department of education at the University of Illinois when he discovered education professors were making more money than history professors. See Broder, “Life Adjustment Education,” 209.

prowess of elementary and secondary students who were shorted through policies

developed by anti-intellectuals. The only way out was from outside the education system:

Across the educational world today stretches an iron curtain which the professional educationalists are busily fashioning. Behind it, in slave-labor camps, are the classroom teachers, whose only hope of rescue is from without. On the hither side lies the free world of science and learning, menaced but not yet conquered. A division into two educational worlds is the great danger that faces us today. American intellectual life is threatened because the first twelve years of formal schooling in the United States are falling more and more completely under the policy making control of a new breed of educator who has no real place in—who does not respect and who is not respected by—the world of scientists, scholars, and professional men.⁶⁸

Admiral Hyman Rickover was another outspoken critic of life adjustment education. Slightly different from Bestor, his rhetoric frequently identified shortcomings with United States education by comparisons with other countries' educational programs. In doing so, Rickover also exposed concerns of a general lack of global competitiveness through an uneducated nation. In specific arguments against life adjustment education, Rickover claimed programs that allowed students to pick their own courses were harmful because "talented children are often slower to decide on their careers since their interests are broad and they are more versatile than the average child."⁶⁹ He also lampooned impracticalities within life adjustment education recounting a student applying for Yale admission whose transcripts listed a lackluster listing of academic credits including "two in English, one in American history, and the remaining nine credits in the following subjects: typing, speech, chorus, physical education, journalism, personality problems,

⁶⁸ Bestor, *Educational Wastelands*, 121.

⁶⁹ H.G. Rickover, *Education and Freedom* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1959), 119.

and marriage and family.” He further added “it would be funny were it not so deeply tragic.”⁷⁰

Considering the climate of educational criticism in the mid-1950s, it is no surprise that the Chicago Public Schools life adjustment education influenced guide had negative public feedback. In September of 1955, Chelsy Manly published a series of back-to-school education themed articles in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. In his first article he noted the general decline of public education citing one of the most outspoken life adjustment education critics, Arthur Bestor, and stated “many authorities attribute the decline of educational standards to modern ‘educationalism,’ a system of pedagogy which is more concerned about the happiness, the interests and the ‘felt needs’ of the student than with the traditional intellectual disciplines.”⁷¹ In his subsequent article Manly continued his theme of investigating education in the Chicago Public Schools and indicted the 1954 language arts curriculum guide as representative of life adjustment education. For the second straight day, he quoted arguments from Bestor claiming that “educationalists” were the problem.⁷²

Along with this criticism against the Chicago Public Schools curriculum, there were also specific attacks against the teaching of English. In the March 9th, 1960, edition of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, a reporter gave an account of a outraged parent who discovered her son’s graded English assignments and noticed “not a single illiteracy was

⁷⁰ Ibid., 120.

⁷¹ Chesly Manly, “Role of City School Vital: Explain Why.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 4 1955.

⁷² Chesly Manly, “It Was Rugged Entering High School in 1856.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 5 1955. Manly would report on History courses in Chicago Schools two days later with a story entitled “History Book in Chicago Schools Conform to Leftists’ Goal.”

marked or otherwise challenged on these papers, on which all the ratings were ‘excellent’ or ‘good.’”⁷³ In the April 19th, 1960, edition of the same publication, one reporter argued that teachers did not teach grammar because “educationalists committed to life adjustment philosophy have decreed that grammar is an unnecessary discipline.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, the reporter argued that the NCTE, which was listed as a major influence in the official English teaching guide used in Chicago public schools, was inadequate because instead of affirming prescribed grammatical rules that would value one dialect over another. The reporter claimed the NCTE “insists that ‘students should not be encouraged to believe that the language of one ‘level’ is necessarily better or worse than that of another’”⁷⁵ The article additionally concluded that the Chicago public school teaching guide was inadequate because of its life adjustment education influenced ideas that inadequately taught proper English skills:

The guide is replete with pedagogical cant of the life adjustment school, such as “pupil-personality objectives,” “enjoying wholesome leisure,” “improving family living,” “protecting life and health,” and developing a “sense of security.” A section for the fifth grade on “Using the telephone Correctly and Courteously” takes up a page and a half....some superior pupils in Chicago’s schools do turn in creditable essays. Most of them, however, are woefully deficient in punctuation, spelling, and the meaning of words....They wouldn’t know a gerund from a Geryon, the three-bodied monster slain by Hercules—and neither would most of their teachers.⁷⁶

These reporters’ concerns were not the only attacks on the teaching of English.

Rudolph Flesch’s book *Why Johnny Can’t Read and What You Can Do About It*,

⁷³ “Some Basic Skills,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 9 1960.

⁷⁴ Chesly Manly, “Elementary Pupils Don’t Learn Grammar; It Isn’t Taught!” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 18 1960.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

published in 1955 advocated a phonetic curriculum and claimed that professional educators were responsible for poor schooling.⁷⁷ Flesch argued that “just as war is ‘too serious a matter to be left to the generals,’ so, I think the teaching of reading is too important to be left to the educators.”⁷⁸ In his work he presented a pragmatic account of reading inadequacies and claimed that educational specialists were ruining a generation of students by not allowing empirical techniques of reading instruction. Along with his attack, he included almost one hundred pages of exercises, readily available for teaching.

Conclusion

Concurrent to criticisms in the 1950s, the NCTE presidents reflected concerns over the future of education as seen in their annual convention addresses, however they did not dismiss the value of previous educational ideas.⁷⁹ In the 1956 presidential address, Luella B. Cook argued that teachers should be wary of educational rhetoric that placed too much faith in science. She claimed that educators “have turned, with what seems to be an almost frenzied zeal, to the practical,” or “those aspects of learning that immediately can be translated into action...or objectively tested and measured.”⁸⁰ She further argued that teachers should continue to strive to teach humanities and values. In an ominous passage, seeming to foretell the impending debate over the academic rigor in English, she contended that teachers should hold fast to their own ideals:

⁷⁷ Leila M. Christenbury, “The Origin, Development, and Decline of the Secondary English Elective Curriculum,” (PhD diss., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1980), 47.

⁷⁸ Rudolf Flesch, *Why Johnny Can't Read and What You Can Do About It* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), ix.

⁷⁹ Using these addresses as research extends the work in Radner, *Fifty Years of English Teaching*, 1958.

⁸⁰ Luella Cook, “Man’s Reach Should Exceed His Grasp,” *The English Journal* 46, no. 2 (1957): 76.

Ours is an age of quantitative measurement, but the need for the future is for an appreciation of quality. That is the hidden challenge contained in the theme we have chosen for this forty-sixth annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English—a challenge to hold fast to our faith in values in an age that has all but deified facts—at the same time that we give facts their due.⁸¹

In the following year's presidential address, Helen Mackintosh continued on the previous year's ideas of teaching values and humanities. She delivered her speech a mere six weeks following the launch of Sputnik, and subsequently she focused her 1957 address on technological implications for humanity. She presented many examples of science advances including those in transportation, education, and media, but she fell short of discussing implications for the classroom. She did claim that these advances made the teaching of values and humanistic aspects of education important and through connecting relevant literature and encouraging effective communication, the English teacher's role was increasingly valuable.

In 1958, NCTE president Brice Harris advocated that English teachers should take action to convince school administration that the teaching of English was valuable, to show the importance of the discipline to the public, and to urge other English teachers to join and support common causes. Within this call, Harris presented dismal perspectives of public perception over English teachers. These claims addressed an almost impossible, idealistic conception of what teachers should do:

What does English mean to [the public]? An alarming number of these wards that we teach in elementary, secondary, and college classes, they say, are unable to read, write, spell, use correct grammar, punctuate, or interpret the simplest prose passage....Current methods of teaching class discussion, and the attempt to give a student purpose in a course are all wrong.⁸²

⁸¹ Ibid., 78.

⁸² Brice Harris, "Act Well Your Part," *The English Journal* 48, no. 3 (1959): 117.

Harris's solution was twofold: (1) appeal to the public, and (2) work with other English organizations to decide the future of the discipline.⁸³ In terms of the first request, Harris recommended informing every outlet, including the media, parents, and friends, that the English teacher should receive better pay and improved working conditions, including small class sizes. As for the second, Harris omitted specific, possible English organizations with which NCTE could align itself, but he did mention the need to incorporate professors of English from colleges and universities. Presumably, Harris was indicting the Modern Language Association (MLA), a parallel English organization traditionally at odds with the missions and goals of the NCTE.

Harris' goals would come to fruition in the coming years. As I show in the next chapter, The NCTE sought solutions to both goals by appealing to the public and seeking out the help of other organizations in order to acquire federal funding for the teaching of English. In one aspect this spirit was similar to the origin of the NCTE: they were acting as a political organization, advocating for a change in attitudes toward how English should be taught. Additionally, as seen by the Victory Corps response during WWII, the NCTE historically advocated for the vitality and relevancy of their discipline.

My argument in the next chapter concentrates on another example of the NCTE politically maneuvering the promotion of its discipline to fit the favored governmental model. In this case it would be the governmental and public response to the 1957 Russian launch of Sputnik and the subsequent passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958. This act concentrated funding on math, science, and foreign language education. The NCTE responded by petitioning governmental entities for funding through

⁸³ Ibid., 120-122.

Congressional testimony and publishing documents linking the poor state of English to national implications. However, in doing so they were abandoning previous values established during their fifty-year existence.

This shift in NCTE policy will be discussed in detail during the next chapter, however this chapter's summary on NCTE policies in post-war America is vital in establishing that connection. The NCTE's support of progressive education was evident. Through their publications, they advocated a student-centered English curriculum based in experiential learning. Wider education movements including progressive education, the Cardinal Principles, and the life adjustment education movement mirrored this emphasis. Additionally, they advocated an expansive definition that included speech and listening skills along with reading and writing. As broader social and political changes occurred, the NCTE would refocus their goals and in the process abandon previous ideas vital to their organization.

CHAPTER THREE

“SPOKESMAN FOR THE PROFESSION AS A WHOLE”: 1958-1961

The real meaning of the satellite is that it provides a dramatic glimpse into the depth and violence of the great scientific revolution in which we are all caught up and which daily alters all aspects of our personal and national lives. The message which this little ball carries to all Americans, if they would but stop and listen, is that in the last half of the twentieth century—in this age of incredible technological change—nothing is as important as the trained and educated mind. This sphere tells not of the desirability but the *urgent necessity* of the highest quality and expanded dimensions of the educational effort. It states more dramatically than ever before that the future of the twentieth century lies in the hands of those who have placed education and its Siamese twin—research in the position of first priority.¹

These words, written by Franklin D. Murphy, chancellor of the University of Kansas, a few months after Sputnik’s launch, illustrated an American educator’s fear and anticipation wrought by the implications of the Soviet scientific feat. Extreme rhetoric warned that education was necessary to compete in an increasingly complex world; the future of democratic ideals and the American way of life was at stake. Following the launch of Sputnik I in 1957, politicians scrambled into action with recommendations for educational reforms. A few months later, Congress passed The National Defense Education Act (NDEA). This 1958 act allocated federal funds toward many areas including: student loans; state educational research and testing; investigation of audio-visual techniques, such as radio and television, in education; and state grants toward

¹ Franklin D. Murphy, “The Real Meaning of the Satellite,” *The Educational Record* 39, no. 1 (1958): 35.

strengthening programs of math, science, and foreign language.² This last item has become the most recognizable and noted element of the act.

English was not initially part of the NDEA and this angered many in the English education profession. To them, Congress implicitly fostered a perception that English was less important than math, science, or foreign language. In essence, it relegated English to a minor role among the secondary disciplines.³ Albert R. Kitzhaber, 1964 NCTE president and English professor who was heavily involved with Congressional lobbying efforts, stated that when the NDEA was originally passed, “we in English protested vigorously....The subject to which we had given our lives, the subject that underlies instruction in all other subjects, had in effect been labeled a frill by Congress, something of no importance to national wellbeing.”⁴ Over the next few years, the NCTE would lead a charge to establish the teaching of English’s place in government funding. They would accomplish this by demonstrating the problematic state of English teaching and convincing Congress that those issues were vital to national interests.

In this chapter I trace the NCTE’s political involvement in lobbying for federal money toward research in the teaching of English. This involvement is important for two reasons. First, it clarifies a common misconception that the launch of Sputnik and subsequent passage of the NDEA resulted in only changing the American education landscape through affecting reforms in the teaching of math and science. I argue that it

² “Final Action by the 85th,” *Congressional Digest*, 37, no. 12 (1958): 291.

³ Christenbury, “The Origin, Development, and Decline of the Secondary English Elective Curriculum,” 63-64.

⁴ Albert Kitzhaber, “Reform in English,” *College English* 26, no. 5 (1965): 338.

importantly altered the discipline of English through the NCTE, an organization that had become a primary podium for concerns in the teaching of English, advocating and ultimately receiving federal funds for a new, discipline-oriented focus. Second, this change within the NCTE signified a shift from the NCTE's political nature in earlier decades. Instead of supporting a broadly defined, student-centered curriculum as they advocated in the earlier periods of the twentieth century, the NCTE shifted to supporting a specific, subject-centered academic based curriculum. This shift was represented by the particular curriculum subject matter advocated including a new definition for "English" and also with the NCTE's new relation with the MLA, an organization who had historically held opposing values. As I emphasize throughout this chapter the NCTE's shift had its share of opposing viewpoints within the organization. Many complained that the change newly advocated during the late 1950s and early 60s ignored previously held viewpoints that represented primary NCTE tenets.

Ultimately, this initial push for federal funds did not succeed as well as NCTE officials hoped, but they did achieve modest success. During the NDEA revision hearings of 1961, NCTE representatives spoke before Congress; attempted to sway key representatives, senators, and educational policymakers; and distributed NCTE conducted research that cogently stated their arguments for reforms. In spite of this, English was not included in NDEA revisions. It did, on the other hand, convince the Commissioner of Education, Sterling McMurrin to allocate money toward English research programs. This program, named Project English, was the first step in the NCTE navigating its way into federal programs. As I show in the next chapter, the NCTE did not stop its lobbying

efforts and attempted to steer federal research funds until 1964 when English was included in NDEA reforms.

Growth and Expansion within the NCTE

John Gerber, NCTE president in 1955, argued that during his presidential tenure, the Executive Committee developed the NCTE from “not only a service organization for its members but an increasingly effective spokesman for the profession as a whole.”⁵ This was evident in the 1950s when the NCTE sought to strengthen its organization through increasing membership, bolstering financial earnings, and asserting its role in lobbying for changes in federal English education policy. By the end of the 1950s, the NCTE had asserted itself as the major representatives of the discipline.

J.N. Hook was Executive Secretary of the NCTE from 1954-1959. He spoke of this time period in his history of the NCTE, *A Long Way Together: A Personal View of the NCTE's First Sixty-Seven Years*. Hook made it clear when he accepted the position that he intended to strengthen the NCTE. In his 1953 acceptance letter, Hook stated that the Council could “do much more than has yet been done to improve instruction in English,” including helping to improve instruction and teachers. He specifically mentioned that he wanted “to help the youngster in the classroom in what we know to be vital: to learn to improve his communication with his contemporaries and with the best minds of other ages.”⁶ These were Hook’s goals when he accepted the position and in

⁵ Gerber, as quoted in Hook, *A Long Way*, 175.

⁶ J.N. Hook to Paul Farmer, August 9, 1953, Record Series 15/70/001, Box 4, University of Illinois Archives.

many ways he followed through on his acceptance letter; he was able to strengthen the organization, positioning it to achieve political accomplishments during the 1960s.

Hook described the 1950s as a period of growth for the NCTE where the organization continually searched for expansion and increased revenue. The NCTE expanded services through sponsorship of teacher training institutes and provided classroom materials, it established NCTE achievement awards to recognize outstanding high-school writers, and it organized tours of Europe with NCTE officials serving as tour guides. All of this was completed in Hook's mind to increase the number of members that in turn could increase the dues acquired through members. As Hook stated "The increasing benefits proved to be excellent inducements to join the Council, and each new membership furnished a few dimes that could be used to add still more benefits."⁷

Starting in 1954, the NCTE sponsored teacher-training workshops. Taking place at different colleges and universities across the country, NCTE members were encouraged to attend these workshops to improve their content knowledge and stay abreast on current research. One example of this was featured in the November 28th, 1957, annual business meeting report with a resolution encouraging members to "assume his professional responsibilities" through attending "summer workshops sponsored by the Council."⁸ This resolution was followed one year later at the November 27th, 1958, NCTE Annual Business Meeting that passed a similar one. It argued that these programs were valuable and resolved to "encourage the participation of more teachers in the 1959

⁷ Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 164.

⁸ Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting, National Council of Teachers of English, November 28, 1957, Record Series 15/70/01, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

workshops.”⁹ This was the forerunner of summer institutes that received federal funding during the early 1960s.¹⁰

Hook also recounted the importance of the NCTE Achievement Awards. Starting in 1958, this program recognized high school students who excelled in English. While no financial award was presented to the winners, Hook contended that all of the recipients were “recommended for college scholarships or other financial assistance.”¹¹ These awards were an example of the NCTE seeking publicity through promoting the importance of its subject.¹² If a local paper recognized award winners by placing their names and pictures in their publication, then the NCTE accomplished three goals of publicizing the subject of English, promoting their organization, and fostering a symbolic connection of organization with outstanding academic merit. This type of award was particularly vital following the criticism of public education during the 1950s. As I discussed in the previous chapter, American education, and life adjustment education specifically, was criticized for its association with promoting an overtly superfluous curriculum that emphasized non-academic classroom lessons. The NCTE was associated with this movement, therefore providing an outlet for shifting public opinion was important.

⁹ Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting, National Council of Teachers of English, November 27, 1958, Record Series 15/70/01 Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

¹⁰ Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 165.

¹¹ Ibid., 166.

¹² Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 199.

Another way that J.N. Hook and the NCTE encouraged membership was through sponsoring literary-focused overseas tours. These NCTE-sponsored trips were started in 1956, and started out as all-inclusive European excursions with tours given by NCTE officials. In the 1960s, they evolved into trips where NCTE members could stay in one British location and receive a tour from local educators. During the first few years, Hook estimated hundreds took advantage of these programs.¹³ This activity encouraged current members and also attempted to recruit new members through its promotion of an exciting opportunity.

Hook's leadership coincided with an increased NCTE membership. In 1953, the NCTE only had about 19,000 members.¹⁴ To increase the size of the organizations, the NCTE emphasized a goal of reaching 50,000 members by 1960. This campaign, known as "Fifty by Sixty," was met in May 1959 with over 50,000 members. Along with this effort, the NCTE sought to recruit members through established affiliate groups by asking members to recruit one additional member through a program called "Each one reach one." Hook credits both of these efforts to increasing members and effectively generating revenue: the NCTE went from losing money in 1954 to having liquid assets totaling \$190,000 by 1958.¹⁵

Along with this increase in membership, the NCTE changed its organizational structure to increase its efficiency at developing policy. Due to slow processes of

¹³ Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 164-165.

¹⁴ J.N. Hook to Dora V. Smith, July 17th, 1967, Record Series 15/71/006, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

¹⁵ Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 178-179.

appointing new committee members, executive committees were rarely able to quickly develop collegial relations and deliberated on nonessential issues such as the overwhelming amounts of time debating proper personnel for committee positions. As one example of the extent of this drudgery, Hook argued that “in 1953, an Executive Committee member resigned because of boredom; he could not take the endless discussion of whether this or that person should be appointed to a committee.” Soon after this incident, this process was redesigned to allow individual chairpersons to decide appointments. This new method allowed for cohesion to develop quicker and made meetings more efficient.¹⁶

The NCTE also worked to achieve political goals. Hook described most council resolutions during the 1950s as “rather perfunctory, consisting mainly of expressions of thanks,” but that changed in 1957 when several political resolutions were adopted. One in particular foreshadowed the NCTE’s later aims in Congressional lobbying efforts. The resolution, as summed up by Hook, “urged Congress and the USOE to focus no less on language and literature than on science and mathematics.”¹⁷ Specifically, the resolution argued that under the current conditions of national attention “focused on the needs of gifted students in science and mathematics to the exclusion of humanities” there was danger of “an imbalance in the basic education of future leaders.” Therefore, it was resolved that the NCTE would “exert national leadership” and “urge the U.S. Office of Education to exercise national leadership in informing citizens of the United States and

¹⁶ Ibid., 175.

¹⁷ Ibid., 180.

the leaders of professional and learned societies that sound and thorough education in the language arts, literature, and the other humanities is imperative.”¹⁸

This resolution was introduced by a committee of NCTE members including James Squire who took over Hook’s role as Executive Secretary in 1960 and played a major role in lobbying efforts toward Congress and the federal government. Like many of his colleagues in the NCTE, Squire started out his professional career as an English teacher, but continued his academic studies and received a PhD in English Education at the University of California, Berkeley. In recounting his early career, Squire attributed one of the most impressionable moments from meeting Dora Smith. While Squire was working at a demonstration summer school, he met with Smith whom he claimed “acted like she thought I was doing something important.” She, in turn, recommended additional local California colleagues who shared similar pedagogical interests. Because of Smith’s influence in the teaching of English, Squire was flattered and took Smith up on her offer. This sparked friendships and professional relationships with other teachers, and it also influenced Squire to take part in NCTE activities.¹⁹ Squire’s rise in the NCTE was quick and ultimately ended with achieving the highest post, Executive Secretary. He worked with local California NCTE affiliate groups in the 1940s and early 50s and then was appointed chairman of the resolutions committee for the NCTE convention. His ability to lead on that commission combined with recommendations from other colleagues gave

¹⁸ Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting, National Council of Teachers of English, November 28, 1957, Record Series 15/70/001, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

¹⁹ James Squire, Interview by Alfred Grommon, November 21, 1978, Part I, Box SG-02, p. 1-13, National Council of Teachers of English Archives.

him a nomination to become the successor of J.N. Hook as the NCTE Executive Secretary in 1960.²⁰

One of the main goals of Squire's tenure was to increase the professionalism between the NCTE and other organizations including the MLA.²¹ These two organizations had historically held opposing views and represented different factions of English teachers. Throughout the twentieth century, the NCTE had represented the interests of K-12 teacher while the MLA espoused the viewpoints of the higher education English instructor. Along with these differing contingencies came different concerns with the former interested in pedagogical practices and the latter concentrating on academic issues. In addition, the NCTE was frequently associated with recommending student-centered teaching practices while the MLA fought for academic rigor.²² Thomas Pollock, looking back at his unique professional career as being president of the NCTE in 1948 and vice-president of the MLA in 1952, articulated these differences through presenting their inception. He argued the MLA traces their roots to Eastern professors of English while the NCTE's origin was in "Midwestern teachers who thought the entrance examinations in English at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, and the resultant required reading lists in the schools were too restrictive."²³

²⁰ Ibid., 13-26.

²¹ Carlsen, Interview by Alfred Grommon, 1.

²² Diane B. Langston, "A Historical Construct of English as a Discipline: 100 Years of Conflict and Compromise" (PhD diss. Georgia State University, 1995): 101-151.

²³ Thomas C. Pollock, "The Profession in Perspective: Two Reminiscences of the NCTE," *The English Journal* 66, no. 4 (1977): 8. For a more detailed, but brief history of the MLA, see, The Executive Secretary, "The Beginning, Development, and Impact of the MLA as a Learned Society," *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 73, no. 5 (1958). For a more detailed history of the early days of the

According to his accounts, Pollock's role in the NCTE was purposely aimed at strengthening cordial relationships between both organizations. He claimed John DeBoer, NCTE president in 1942, approached him asking for his help in improving collegiality with the MLA including serving on an NCTE committee to address this issue. Pollock turned down the chairmanship of this committee, and claimed that "informal and unheralded diplomacy was probably wiser than formal committee action, which I feared might lead to undesirable argument and confrontation."²⁴ Though this quote makes it seem as if the two organizations were very antagonistic toward each other, Pollock added that "there was nothing wrong officially with the relationships between the two organizations then, but there was a good deal of blue sky between them."²⁵ In spite of this history, things began to change during the late 1950s and into the 1960s. The relationship between the two organizations became more collegial through a mutual working relationship to improve the status of the English discipline. Though there were still differences in the approaches each group took toward recommending changes in English curriculum, they made progress in reaching consensus.

In 1958, the MLA was appropriated money by the Rockefeller Foundation to study foreign language preparation. The reports of this study's success ultimately translated into ensuing inclusion of foreign language study in the NDEA. Following this success, the MLA focused its attention toward the teaching of English and volunteered to

NCTE see Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 1974, Robert S. Fay, "The Reorganization Movement in Secondary English Teaching," *The English Journal* 68, no. 4 (1979); William R. Davis, "Ten Years of Co-operative Effort," *The English Journal* 14, no. 10 (1925).

²⁴ Pollock, "The Profession in Perspective."

²⁵ Ibid.

host a series of conferences studying the subject funded by the Ford Foundation. The Ford Foundation did not want to leave these conferences solely to the MLA. They argued that the MLA was mainly college professors and they were unfairly trying to dictate curriculum to elementary and secondary educators, two underrepresented groups in MLA. The NCTE found out that the MLA was declined and suggested that this become a cooperative project.²⁶ The MLA agreed if the College English Association (CEA) and American Studies Association (ASA) could also join. Ultimately, the Basic Issues Conference became a joint project between those four organizations with the MLA and NCTE assuming a greater role than the CEA and ASA.²⁷

In 1958, these groups met and developed 35 questions aimed at establishing “basic issues” in English pedagogy. Their discussion covered aspects ranging from a general working definition of English, to proper teacher certification. The resulting publication was titled “The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English,” and its topics covered multiple issues in the teaching of English. Explicitly developed in the preface of this work were three reasons arguing for the importance of studying English. The first was for practicality; verbal skills are important in society. The second, English has a “civilizing value” that allows for one to become more “human” through literature. The

²⁶ J.N. Hook to Executive Committee, February 2, 1957, Record Series 15/73/003, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives. Hook claimed that NCTE members met with MLA Executive Secretary, G.W. Stone to emphasize that “The NCTE Executive Committee took the point of view that such a study might be very much worthwhile and very productive but that it would carry greater authority if NCTE were made a full partner instead of being given a only a subsidiary role.”

²⁷ J.N. Hook, Interview by Alfred Grommon, Executive and Administrative Presidential Interviews, Box SG-01, p. 10-11, National Council of Teachers of English Archives. Hook recalled the MLA rejection as “the Ford Foundation turned them down, saying in effect, you guys are college professors, and you are saying that you want to make the rules, and you want to describe the issues that are applicable in elementary schools and the high schools, about which you know nothing.”

third reason established the intrinsic pleasure one can receive from reading.²⁸ The authors divided these “basic issues” into two categories: goals, content, and teaching problems; and preparation and certification of teachers. These questions were not posed with answers, but emphasized the need for research in the field.

Though the MLA and NCTE were working together, there was still tension between the two organizations. The NCTE still primarily represented elementary and secondary interests and the MLA’s representation was mainly college professors. This led to some divergent opinions in how English should be taught; especially between the elementary representatives and the college contingency.²⁹ As Pollock recalled, “the only thing that this conference could agree on—it was a very useful thing—was what the basic issues were. We could not agree on any one positive thing.”³⁰

Notwithstanding this history, there were two major transformations that came out of this publication. First, the MLA and NCTE began more cooperative efforts. As J.N. Hook recounted, this project “reduced the mutual distrust between the MLA and NCTE and paved the way for the harmonious working relationships that have since existed.”³¹ As an example of the NCTE attempting to smooth relations, during the 1958 convention

²⁸ Members of the 1958 Conference, “The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English,” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 74, no. 4, part 2: supplement (1959): 1-4.

²⁹ James Squire, Interview by Alfred Grommon, 47; Hook claimed that “some of the representatives of MLA, ASA, and CEA had little realistic, firsthand experience with elementary and secondary schools. In an extreme instance, one of them, saying that his fifth-grade son could read *Hamlet* with understanding and pleasure recommended that Shakespeare—at least *Macbeth* and *Midsummer Night’s Dream* if not *Hamlet*—should be taught in the fifth grade.” See Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 183.

³⁰ Thomas C. Pollock, Interview by Alfred Grommon, Box SG-02, p. 19, National Council of Teachers of English Archives.

³¹ J.N. Hook to Dora V. Smith, July 17, 1967, Record Series 15/71/006, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

they passed a resolution that thanked the MLA, along with the other groups from the Basic Issues conference. The resolution “express[ed] its appreciation both to the participating organizations and to the members of the committee for their willingness to meet together to study common problems...” and “recommend[ed] that this kind of collective action be continued in the future for the improvement of the profession.”³² Second, the publication served as a blueprint for future NCTE research endeavors. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the NCTE would produce additional publications detailing the problematic nature of the teaching of English. These publications essentially spoke to the same “Basic Issues” as first conceived through this document, though, as I will detail, they also recommended changes.³³

“Somewhat reactionary as I see it,” Internal Arguments within the NCTE

Implicitly, *The Basic issues* signified a transition from NCTE policies just a few years earlier. At the outset of the conference, Hook claimed, MLA representatives advocated a traditional college preparatory curriculum for students while the NCTE sought a curriculum that addressed the academic needs “of *all* American students.”³⁴ Though into the 1960s, Hook argued that the two organizations espoused similar ideas and “sometimes the songs sung by MLA and NCTE leaders were hardly

³² Resolution XIII, Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting, National Council of Teachers of English, November 27, 1958, Record Series 15/70/1 Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

³³ James Squire, Interview by Alfred Grommon, 48 explains that “it gave rise to influence not only *The National Interest in the Teaching of English*, but the *Freedom and Discipline* and the CEEB work, but much of the curriculum work in several state, the institutes later on that the College Board planed and sponsored, and a great many Council activities for many, many years.”

³⁴ Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 182.

distinguishable.”³⁵ During this period the NCTE shifted from an organization representing primarily the interests of student-centered teaching advocates into an organization advocating a specific skill-based curriculum.

Comparing the initial *Basic Issues* questions over the goals, content, and teaching problem section against previously discussed NCTE publications, one sees a redefinition of advocated English interests. For example, the first question posed “What is English?” Within that, the proposition was made that “we agree generally that English composition, language, and literature are within our province,” but the analysis questioned the usefulness of these areas by arguing “we are uncertain whether our boundaries should include...public speaking, journalism, listening...” Though the question mentioned the importance of some of those areas in encouraging individual growth, the question concluded with asking “has the fundamental liberal discipline of English been replaced...by ad hoc training in how to write a letter, how to give a radio speech, manners, dating, telephoning, vocational guidance?”³⁶ These last examples, an overt reference to the life adjustment English curriculum, demonstrated an example of the redefining English and shifting away from previous curricular goals. As mentioned in the last chapter, the NCTE previously included these teaching methods as noted in the Chicago Public Schools Language Arts curriculum and in the Language Arts Curriculum Series.

There were other concerns about later volumes of the curriculum series shifting from ideas found in earlier volumes. In a letter to James Squire, 1957 NCTE President

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Members of the 1958 Conference, “The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English,” 4.

Helen Mackintosh wrote in response to serving on a new Commission on the English Curriculum. She claimed that she would not want to serve on a commission “with a more conservative point of view, ” and additionally stated that some who were attempting English reform were “somewhat reactionary as I see it,” and unfairly criticized curriculum volumes one through three for being “too permissive as well as progressive in character.” Clearly, some members were hesitant to embrace these changes.

Furthermore, there was still tension between the NCTE and other organizations. The College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB), another organization working toward reforming English in the 1950s, and the MLA represented the academic interests, even though the MLA’s relationships with the NCTE were becoming more cordial; and the NCTE represented the educational interest. Squire detailed one incident highlighting this distrust. Though the MLA had cordially been working with the NCTE, Squire claimed that when the CEEB established a commission on English they initially wanted to bolster their ideas emphasizing “academically oriented reform” through attacking their rivals. He said they considered defaming “Dora V. Smith, the English Language Arts, and NCTE, and [blaming] all of the problems in English on them.” Squire explained to Harold Martin, the chair of the CEEB Commission on English that Smith was one of the most influential English instructors in the Midwest and if they chose to criticize Smith, “it would bring all of them together and it would completely limit the effectiveness of the commission on English.” The others agreed on this and ceased their efforts. In terms of

their focus on the NCTE, Squire claimed “instead of attacking NCTE, they appointed me to the commission.”³⁷

This perspective from the CEEB was additionally documented in a letter to Dora Smith, where Al Grommon explained that during planning for the CEEB 1962 summer institutes, Harold Martin had made a distinction between the CEEB’s curriculum plan and the NCTE’s previous attempts at curriculum issues. He claimed that Martin “polarized what he conceives of being the NCTE’s ‘socially oriented’ curriculum and the curricula promoted by the CEEB English Commission.” Additionally, in distinguishing between their curriculum and the NCTE’s, Grommon claimed that that “in his labeling of the contrast between their program and ours, he put us in an unfortunate light. When he finished, several people applauded vigorously.” This crowd was reacting to the uncertainty of the NCTE moving away from the curriculum and student-centered curriculum to which it was associated. In danger of these ideas spreading, Grommon advocating meeting with the CEEB soon because is Martin was “saying the same things to the universities, administrators, and teachers throughout the country, then the Council may be in for increasing resistance.”³⁸

Tripod Curriculum

Upon the release of *The Basic Issues*, the editors of *The English Journal* editors tempered possible disagreements between the report and their readers with a brief account on the origin and importance of the report. They claimed the conference brought

³⁷ James Squire, Interview by Alfred Grommon, 11.

³⁸ Al Grommon to Dora Smith, N.D., Record Series 15/73/3, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

together educators of different backgrounds representing varying levels of English instruction. With these backgrounds were clashing opinions and “debate, although always friendly or at least polite, was always warm.”³⁹ In spite of this conflict, the editors claimed, the attendees were most concerned with helping English instruction. They warned readers that their own views of English instruction would probably counter the recommendations in the publication and some readers “may believe that an emphasis here is wrong, that a statement is slanted unfairly, that some issues are not issues, that others were not retained in the final draft.” Additionally, the article acknowledged NCTE members “may be angered by some things you read.” In spite of this opinion, the editors told readers that the publication was in the best interests of the discipline because it encouraged a public discourse on an embattled subject:

Not all NCTE representatives agree completely with every word or every nuance, but they do agree that here is a document representing the thinking of informed and vitally interested professional leaders, a document that deserves wide distribution to stimulate thought and action aimed at resolving as many of the basic issues as possible.⁴⁰

This warning emphasized the shift underwent by the NCTE. The editors conceded that readers were “likely to disagree,” and attempted to soften the impact of the publication by asking NCTE members to trust the representatives who worked on the “Basic Issues” report because of the astute thinking and authority of the “informed and vitally interested professional leaders.” NCTE members were asked to put aside their personal feelings that were represented in previous years of fighting for their discipline from a ground-level perspective and instead to put faith in so-called experts in the field.

³⁹ “NCTE Bulletin Board” *The English Journal* 48, no. 7 (1959): 417.

⁴⁰ “NCTE Bulletin Board,” 417.

There were concerns that “The Basic Issues” produced an overtly rigid curriculum. Ruth Strickland, 1960 NCTE President, wrote that the report recommended a sequential curriculum “from the kindergarten through the graduate school.” She cautioned that though this curriculum could only be valuable if “we safeguard our concern for individual differences and make our program as flexible as it is cumulative and sequential.” In elaborating on this idea, she cited her travels to England where she became convinced that a rigid curriculum that “fails to recognize and to give careful attention to individual differences in language background and rate of growth in language handicaps great numbers of students both during their school years and forever afterward.” This argument was included in *The English Journal* within its section on incoming NCTE officers. Each officer included a quote introducing themselves to NCTE members. Positioning this concerning attitude toward the rigidity in “The Basic Issues” central to Strickland’s incoming presidency only adds to its importance and controversy within Council membership.⁴¹

One aspect in particular sums up the organizational shift and ensuing argument over the NCTE: the tripod curriculum. The statement in *The Basic Issues* “we agree generally that English composition, language, and literature are within our province” was notable because those three areas would become known as a contentious pedagogical typology known as the tripod curriculum. This type of curriculum, which framed the teaching of English in the previously stated areas of composition, language, and literature, was envisioned through a series of conferences in 1955 that redesigned college

⁴¹ “The New Officers of the National Council of Teachers of English.” *The English Journal* 58, no. 9 (1959): 529.

instruction of English.⁴² This definition was also endorsed by the College Entrance Examination Board's (CEEB) Commission on English. By engaging in dialogue with the MLA and agreeing with the definition of English as created by college and advocated by the CEEB, the NCTE shifted from its support of life adjustment education and its multifaceted definition of English to a specific, limiting definition of English.

This "Tripod" concept was widely associated with the CEEB. In detailing this definition, the CEEB's Commission on English wrote in their 1965 Report, "The catch-all character of many English programs results in confusion of purpose and diffusion of responsibilities, both inimical to good instruction" and in recommendations listed "Recommendation 12. That the scope of the English program be defined as the study of language, literature, and composition, written and oral, and that matters not clearly related to such study be excluded from it."⁴³ Though this commission's report was dated 1965, it met as early as 1960. Furthermore, as evidenced by its use in the "Basic Issues" report, the concept had trickled down earlier to high school curriculum planning.

Adopted by the NCTE in their own works and in future publications, this definition was not without detractors. George Carlsen, widely quoted in the second chapter for his life adjustment education support and president of the NCTE in 1962 claimed in a 1978 interview that "some of my friends call it the unholy trinity" while his

⁴² Applebee credits a series of conferences at Yale during 1955 in producing the Tripod typology. See Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 192.

⁴³ *Freedom and Discipline in English* (New York: The College Entrance Examination Board, 1965), 13. In a 1961 speech at the NCTE convention, Floyd Rinker, Executive Secretary of the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board stated that "the three elements of the English curriculum are language, literature, and composition." See Floyd Rinker, "Priorities in the English Curriculum," *The English Journal* 51, no. 5 (1962): 311.

interviewer, Alfred Grommon, 1968 NCTE president, reiterated by calling it “the fault tripod.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, in a 1963 essay for *The English Journal*, Carlsen implicitly argued against the tripod curriculum by elaborating on his own “three-pronged” definition of English as teaching reading skills, teaching proper English, and helping students enjoy reading.⁴⁵ Specifically, the main argument against this typology claimed the tripod curriculum “tends to fragmentize ‘English,’” because it viewed English as a specific set of skills that could be divided into three neatly divided areas.⁴⁶ Literary Critic and former English teacher Neil Postman fervently agreed:

The Tripod Curriculum is as unnatural, irrelevant, and unworkable as the metaphor is ugly. Show me in the natural environment any situation requiring the production of what we call a composition, and I’ll yield. Show me how the study of literary works is not also the study of a language situation and I’ll yield again. And show me how the grammarian can help our children understand themselves and their environment, and I will still yield.⁴⁷

Postman’s argument underlies the distinction between this curriculum vision and the ideas of previous NCTE positions. Earlier NCTE publications, such as *An Experience Curriculum in English*, sought to connect education to real-world situations. Educators, like Postman, who were opposed to the tripod model saw it as limiting not only in terms of separating parts of English instruction but also in that it alienated classroom activities from social situations.

⁴⁴ G. Robert Carlsen, Interview by Alfred Grommon, 7.

⁴⁵ George Robert Carlsen, “NCTE Councilletter: English in the Trenches,” *The English Journal* 52 (4), 1963: 307. In introducing these ideas Carlsen claimed “while the profession is greatly confused over the question of ‘What is English?’ the community is not,” essentially highlighting the distinction between common public concerns and distant academics.

⁴⁶ Edward R. Fagan “English: Field Theory and General Systems,” *Teacher’s College Record* 69, no. 8 (1968): 734.

⁴⁷ Neil Postman, “Linguistics and the Pursuit of Relevance, *The English Journal* 56, no. 8 (1967): 1165.

The NCTE's Committee on the English Curriculum also debated these arguments. In the minutes of the NCTE's Commission on the English Curriculum's meeting on October 1, 1963, one member proposed that fragmenting English skills into the tripod model limited other "objectives in the value area (appreciations, attitudes) and in the area of understandings to which English can and should contribute" including the life lessons that students can acquire from reading literature. Instead, students would just be reading to learn to read. He claimed that there would not be a need for some great works of literature, including Shakespeare, because most would never need to actually know how to read Shakespeare because most students would not actively choose to read anything written by Shakespeare in the future. Furthermore, choosing this tripod model contradicted previous NCTE ideas and "erase at one fell swoop much of what we have always taught literature for and advanced in many statements of objectives..."⁴⁸ Another felt the definition gave the NCTE something concrete they could build on. Even though it might not be the complete definition, NCTE researchers could use those ideas to further define their discipline. One committee member acknowledged the decisiveness over the tripod model and claimed that even though it might limit the conception of an English curriculum, it was a good start to further define the topic and it prevented a crowded definition of English that included too many skills:

[The Tripod definition], which I am told by my colleagues is fairly radical, recognizes English as primarily a skill and one that has three parts, composition, language, and literature. If we accept that as our definition—and I for one do—we

⁴⁸ Commission on the English Curriculum Notes, October 1, 1963, Record Series 15/73/3, Box 2, University of Illinois Archives.

have something to build on, and we avoid the very great danger of overloading the curriculum in English with too many purposes.⁴⁹

Maxwell further discussed the underlying assumptions with this type of list that defined the boundaries of English. He claimed that such attempts were implicitly “attacking the social goals which permeate the existing volumes and urging an intellectual and esthetic set of objectives for our field.” By mentioning the existing volumes, Maxwell indicted the overall NCTE curriculum shift from an expansive, broadly defined, student-centered perspective of English into a narrowed, three-objective, academic position. Clearly this was something on his mind because after he made this statement he claimed that this issue “had been chewing at me for some time and I feel better now that it’s out. Thank you for listening.”⁵⁰

In examining the broader arguments on this topic, the tripod typology can also be seen in terms of shifting education policies limiting the autonomy of teachers. This type of curriculum left little room for teachers to inject their own perspectives into the topics and altering the focus of the curriculum as originally conceptualized by curriculum planners. Instead, teachers were prescribed to teach through a particular model with a predefined definition of English. Hunter McEwan argued the tripod curriculum model placed the teacher in a subservient role to the subject. Instead of valuing the teacher’s place in transmitting the subject to the student, “the authors of the Tripod model were

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English, *The English Language Arts*, 11-12.

aiming to place the pedagogical focus on the subject matter.”⁵¹ Furthermore, McEwan claimed this model valued a traditional approach to the subject limiting English’s uniqueness and value. In this sense, it only allows the three areas of English to be studied. McEwan elaborated this idea of the limiting nature of the Tripod model with examining its impact on the teaching of literature. He claimed that that it would require a traditional view of teaching because literature would be taught “not for the impact that it can have on how to lead a life, but in order to furnish examples of a theme or a plot or any of the other structural qualities that we have identified in our grammar of literature.” Promoting this type of teaching is not without bias. McEwan claimed it favored the traditional, rote, subject-centered form of teaching because it valued “the mastery of a set of concepts and their application to language, literature, and composition, over the process of using language in different ways.”⁵²

By adopting a curriculum model of English that was initially offered as a college curriculum and then advocated by the CEEB for academically talented students entering college, the NCTE ironically reversed its reasons for inception. As presented earlier, the NCTE originated in 1911 out of a perceived college domination of English curricula. In other words, their initial founders felt there were too many tests that controlled the specifics of what secondary English teachers did. This was the NCTE’s founding message and the platform that its early leaders used to initially garner support for a unified English profession. In the case of post-Sputnik education, things had changed.

⁵¹ McEwan, “English Teaching and the Weight of Theory,” 115.

⁵² Ibid.

Here, the NCTE succumbed to college interests instead of representing the views of secondary educators.

The National Interest and the Teaching of English, 1961

During the 1960 NCTE conference, the Executive Committee passed a resolution outlining their plan to appeal for more research and money toward the teaching of English. They claimed that the White House had recently held a conference called the White House Conference on Children and Youth where they advocated “greater emphasis on humanistic studies in education.” Because the NCTE considered themselves “a humanistic study most basic and most often taken by students,” they recommended that the NCTE broadly “support all national efforts to obtain support for the teaching of English and the other humanities on a national scale.” Furthermore, the resolution indicated their plan to widely promote their argument over the poor state of the teaching of English. It resolved to “direct its Executive Committee to inform the nation’s leaders in government, business and education of the Council’s mounting concern over the neglect of English and other humanities in current educational efforts” and “inform the American Congress and the Office of Education of the compelling need for an extension of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 to include English and the humanities” because this was “a vital first step toward improving instruction in English and of stimulating program development in this important area.”⁵³

This resolution developed into feverish lobbying efforts. Initially, the NCTE continued its examinations of the status of English with compiling research and

⁵³ “Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting” November 24, 1960, Record Series 15/70/1, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

publishing *The National Interest and the Teaching of English: A Report on the Status of the Profession* in 1961. In some ways, this report answered the call of Brice Harris in his 1958 NCTE presidential address when he suggested the Council attempt to appeal to the public.⁵⁴ It was meant to arouse public support and politically, it was published in time for every Congressman to receive a copy before NDEA reauthorization hearings were held in 1961.⁵⁵ In other ways, the document was a rallying cry for NCTE members to join the cause of the main office and support their recommended changes in the teaching of English.

This report consisted of three main sections and each provided a different plank in the overall thesis that reasoned for the need to reform the teaching of English. The three sections constituted a deductive argument starting with the solution and refining specific reasons throughout the report. The first section, entitled “What Has to Be Done about the National Need to Improve the Teaching of English,” outlined seven goals claimed necessary to improve the teaching of English. The second section, “The National Problem,” likened the teaching of English to a national crisis because of its pervasiveness and far-reaching effects. The final major section, “The Status of English Teaching Today,” was the longest and its data was widely cited in later English-reform oriented publications.

The first section listed seven goals of English reform. Of these seven, five specifically referred to professional concerns for teachers. Broadly, they aimed at

⁵⁴ Harris, “Act Well Your Part.” 115-122.

⁵⁵ Hook claimed that this production was another example of cooperation between the NCTE and other organizations. The secretary of the MLA, G. W. Stone served on the NCTE Committee that produced this publication. See Hook, *A Long Way Together*, 195.

improving working conditions, strengthening academic programs for future and current educators, and recruiting more English teachers. The remaining two requested changes in pedagogy: one goal recommended more research about the teaching of English while the other explicitly defined the field through the aforementioned tripod curriculum. It claimed a goal was “to focus instruction in English upon the study of language, literature, and composition.”⁵⁶

The second section established the problematic state of English by defining its extent. This section was filled with emotional and logical appeals tied to a backdrop of international and social situations. It also detailed a new world evolving toward a society incapable of being satisfied only with literacy; English pedagogy provided the link for future generations to preserve values and survive in a technological world.

Buffeted by the problems of our twentieth century democracy—complex organization, sudden technological changes, the passionate pressure of self-seeking groups, conflicting ideologies, uncertainty about the future, baffling international problems—modern man must cope with his work, make wise choices and respond to the exacting demands of intelligent citizenship. His success will depend in no small measure not only on his ability to think, to read, and to express his ideas clearly, but also on his acquaintance with the best that has been known and thought in the past.⁵⁷

This section concluded with a discussion of the overall importance of English. The authors claimed that because English skills were applicable to other disciplines, it essentially acted as prerequisites for success in other fields. Additionally, the report contended these issues were heightened not only by Sputnik and the rise of the cold war

⁵⁶ The Committee on National Interest of the National Council of Teachers of English, *The National Interest and the Teaching of English: A Report on the Status of the Profession* (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1961), 3.

⁵⁷ The Committee on National Interest, *The National Interest and the Teaching of English*, 17.

but also by the impending increase in enrollments due to the post WWII baby boom and a looming teacher shortage.

The final section listed an immense amount of data reflecting four areas of need: (1) the need for more teachers, (2) the need for better teachers, (3) the need for better teaching conditions, and (4) the need for more basic research in English and the teaching of English. The issues underlying these areas are similar to the previous section. The baby boom was increasing school attendance, so acquiring more teachers was necessary. In addition, because of the heightened urgency for academic achievement due to international competition combined with a plethora of statistics that demonstrated relatively under-qualified English teachers, the report clamored for better teacher preparation. The third aspect expressed concern about overcrowded classrooms and their effect on an English teacher's ability to have time to adequately grade compositions. This section concluded with a call for more basic research in the teaching of English including the emerging areas of linguistics and new perspectives of grammar.

The NCTE also promoted *The National Interest* to its members and encouraged them to align their own views with those espoused in the publication. In its February 10, 1961, edition of *Council-Grams*, the newsletter distributed to NCTE affiliate groups, claims were made that the strong impact of the publication was causing media attention and helped to support the cause of including English in NDEA reforms. As an example, the *Council-Gram* included clippings from major national newspapers, including the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* that wrote on the importance of the publication.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ "National Council of Teachers of English Council-Grams," Volume 21, 1, February 10, 1961, Record Series 15/71/17, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

These reviews were especially notable considering the rampant attacks on education during the late 1950s. As I detailed in the last chapter, there were numerous media accounts on the poor status of American schools. Some felt American students lagged behind their Soviet Union counterparts and seemed caught up in Cold War fervor. Others rallied against the life adjustment movement and progressive educational methods. At times, English, and particularly the NCTE, was singled out for carelessness in educational methods and a perceived overt reliance on progressive educational methods. With this backdrop in mind, media reports that claimed *The National Interest* was an important educational message positive step in NCTE public relations.

These media reports were an important message to get out to members, because it showed a possible shift in the way that their discipline was treated. But the NCTE did not do this through arguing over their stance on education during the 1950s, instead they were able to win the favor of these publications because they shifted their message to one that was more agreeable with the backlash on education. The NCTE conceded to critics that there were bad teachers and that their curriculum ideas were outdated. These concessions gave them the media support they desired.

In viewing this February 10, 1961 *Council-Gram* as a way to encourage NCTE members to support their cause of including English within the NDEA reauthorization hearings, the most important section of this issue is the list of ways that NCTE members could help. Eleven ideas are suggested including forming “study groups” to giving copies to non-NCTE members who teach English and “encourage them to join and support the

effort to raise national standards.”⁵⁹ The *Council-Gram* further framed their ideas of supporting these standards as a way “to obtain greater national support for the teaching of English and the humanities” and claimed that publishing *The National Interest* was “an attempt to draw together all available factual information about the teaching of English, the shortage of buildings and books, the overcrowded classrooms, the shortage of well-trained teachers, and the inadequacy of teaching conditions.”

While these issues might be factual in their assessment, the NCTE aligned these concerns and their subsequent recommendations with the only way to support the future of English. Lost in these *Council-Gram* suggestions were mentions of ways that affiliates would have a forum to disagree with the issues presented in the publication. Instead, the recommended affiliate activities all framed affiliate actions within the recommendations of the publication. As an example, they suggested that affiliate groups could “plan a special program based on the report” with the possible appearance of “prominent Council members to discuss the state of the profession.” Another suggestion was to “use the report to develop a checklist for evaluating local high school. Encourage high school principals to read this chapter.”

These recommendations were not value free. They reflected the interests NCTE members who wanted to change the status of English in a way that represented their own perspectives and wider issues in education. This is important to note because as I showed in the last chapter, the perspectives of English had changed and were dramatically altered between 1950 and 1960. This document reflected the change of some members of the

⁵⁹ Ibid.

NCTE and also reflected changing the status of English that was recommended by wider critiques of English in the press.

Initial Appeals to Congress, 1961

Following the release of this document, NCTE officials lobbied for the inclusion of the teaching of English within the NDEA. Though this was not achieved, in 1961 Congress authorized a smaller amount of funds for Project English, a program that established English curriculum centers at colleges and universities to evaluate experimental curriculum research using the NCTE's prescribed tripod organization of English as language, literature, and composition.⁶⁰ In 1964, after additionally lobbying, provisions of the NDEA were extended to finance instruction of English and reading, and it allowed more federal funds to be allocated toward English research.⁶¹ This increased the number of affected teachers and funded thousands to attend NDEA sponsored institutes and learn new pedagogical strategies to use themselves or to disseminate to their colleagues.⁶²

Executive committee memorandums from the NCTE archives detail the accounts of James Squire working with governmental players to include English within the NDEA reauthorization. These memos present a candid look at what the NCTE's goals were, whom they were working with, and what they thought about their chances. More

⁶⁰ Michael F. Shugrue, "Project English and Beyond," *ADE Bulletin* 80 (Spring 1985): 18-21.

⁶¹ Arno Jewett, "NDEA now Includes English and Reading," *The English Journal* 53, no. 8 (1964): 580.

⁶² Shugrue, "Project English and Beyond," 18-21.

importantly these memorandums reflect the mind of James Squire and his goals for the NCTE to achieve more power and money directed toward the teaching of English.⁶³

In the March 6, 1961, NCTE Executive Committee Memorandum, Squire outlined the prospects of English's inclusion in the NDEA while also hinting at the Kennedy administration's prospect of including additional funding for the teaching of English. He began the memo by including what he learned from McMurrin, the Commissioner of Education and claimed that he had a positive reaction to the NCTE's publication of *The National Interest and the Teaching of English* and, because of that text, McMurrin wanted to recommend funds toward the subject. He wrote that "the new Commissioner of Education, Sterling B. McMurrin, a professor of Philosophy from the University of Utah, has apparently read the report in detail and is anxious to obtain emergency funds to stimulate research, curriculum development, and other activity in English. The HEW staff is at work preparing plans for a major request for English in the 1962 Presidential Budget... This is in addition to whatever is done about the NDEA and is apparently the direct result of our efforts."⁶⁴ In speaking about the inclusion of the of English within the NDEA, Squire argued "the prospects on NDEA are unclear," and pointed out that a bill was introduced to the House of Representatives that included English within the NDEA which he claimed was "a favorable omen."⁶⁵ Still in his mind

⁶³ Unfortunately, from my research it is unclear if this is the complete set of memorandums, or if some have been omitted. In spite of maybe not having a complete set, these still provide insight into the NCTE's actions toward the federal government in seeking funds.

⁶⁴ James Squire, "Memorandum to the Executive Committee," March 6, 1961, Record Series 15/70/005, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

the work was incomplete, and Squire outlined additional steps the NCTE office would take and recommended Executive Committee Members write to their Congressional representatives to continue their lobbying efforts.⁶⁶

In Squire's April 25 Executive Committee Memorandum, He updated the committee on their progress with the NDEA. He described how he and then NCTE President, Harold Allen, met with Commissioner McMurrin about the status of English instruction and learned of a new project the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) was planning. He elaborated that "We learned in our conversations that something called 'Project English' is one of the two 'new' projects launched by HEW in this administration and that the Administration has already gone to Congress asking for a two million dollar budget extension so that some work can get underway this year."⁶⁷ Furthermore, Squire wrote that this program entitled "Project English" will involve additional funds for research and curriculum development [and] will supplement anything that may become available in an extension of the NDEA."⁶⁸ Squire stepped aside from the specifics of the program to inform the Committee that Allen and he were "impressed with the new Commissioner," and claimed that the McMurrin's plan was to "consult with the leading professional leaders and scholars before undertaking any major project." Squire felt this was an important and novel shift in HEW policy, because in the past the

⁶⁶ Ibid. This memo concluded with an additional indication that the NCTE was influenced by the late 1950s educational rhetoric. At the end of the memo, Squire writes "P.S. I am finding Jerome K. Bruner's The Process of Education as intriguing as Ruth Strickland predicted....our exploratory Committee on Concepts can do much to support a more intellectual program if it works along the lines suggested by Bruner."

⁶⁷ James Squire, "Memorandum to the Executive Committee," April 25, 1961, Record Series 15/70/005, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

HEW faced criticism over “its failure to consult with the professions in advance.” Also, he assured the Committee over the NCTE’s role in this program by stating that he “trust that NCTE and many of its officers will be asked to play a leading role in this conference.”⁶⁹

The April 25 memorandum also included specifics on English’s role in the NDEA. Squire seemed concerned that things were not moving quickly, and that this delay might jeopardize English’s inclusion in the reauthorization.⁷⁰ As another indication of Squire’s stated shift in HEW policy, the memorandum requested committee members to submit names of “prominent engineers and scientists who are interested in English,” because if the NDEA were to include English “the law will require that a panel of advisers be selected. The panel must include four scientists, four engineers, and four others.” Expressing slight indignation and possibly humor, Squire added in parentheses “Congress clearly does not trust the humanists.”⁷¹

In the NDEA reauthorization hearings of 1961, many members of the NCTE spoke before Congressional committees in support of the inclusion of English. In the hearings on expansion and extension of the NDEA before the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare that occurred on May 12 and 13 of 1961, NCTE president, Harold Allen along with liaison officer, Silvy Kraus, and president of the Oregon

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Squire claimed “From all the information that I have available, the administration’s final proposals on NDEA have not been formulated and a definite danger exists that Congress may postpone action until next year if it does not have time for hearings. No one wants to see this happen. We can expect to see administration proposals presented almost as soon as action is taken on the general bills-and possibly before.” See, Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Chapter, Gordon W. Clarke⁷² all spoke in favor of English within the NDEA.

Specifically, they argued over the recommended reauthorization suggested by McMurrin that reworked Title VI: Language Development Program. This section awarded money toward training institutes for elementary and secondary school foreign language teachers of French, Spanish, German, Russian, Italian, modern Hebrew, Japanese, and Chinese and then additional university institutes for the study of “languages less commonly taught” including those “determined by the Commissioner to be critical—Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Urdu, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian.”⁷³

Before the committee, Commissioner McMurrin recommended similar institutes for the study of English. In detailing the logistics of the federally funded institutes for teachers of foreign language, McMurrin grouped English studies within programs to allow foreign language teachers “to obtain advanced training in the foreign country or area where the language they teach is commonly used, and to arrange with institutions of higher education for the establishment of institutes in the field of English as well as modern foreign languages.”⁷⁴ McMurrin attempted to include English into the NDEA through appealing to the success of the foreign language institutes claiming that adding English would “remove a technical barrier which now prevents the act from being used to assist in essential language instruction for the large number of Americans whose native

⁷² The chair of the Senate committee was Senator Wayne Morse (D-Oregon).

⁷³ Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, *National Defense Education Act*, 87th Cong., 1st sess. (1961): 23. In viewing the overlapping of languages needed to instruct current foreign language teachers and provide funding for the recruitment of future teachers, it is important to note the overlapping languages that seem to be of particular importance: Chinese, Japanese, and Russian, in light of Cold War concerns.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

language is not English.” In other words, the NDEA’s addition of English could focus on English learning programs to non-native speakers. McMurrin did not only position the value of English through that use, he spoke to the intrinsic value of the subject and additionally described “the crucial position of English as a keystone of the entire learning process,” and that “the student’s progress in other languages, as well as in other parts of the curriculum, depends upon his ability to understand and use the English language.”⁷⁵ In essence, McMurrin demonstrated his support of English for English’s sake, but further attempted to maneuver its inclusion into the NDEA through appealing to those who found value in its use to instruct non-native speakers within American education.

In speaking before the Senate Committee, NCTE president Harold Allen, after giving a brief introduction of his position and organization, inserted a summary of *The National Defense and the Teaching of English* into the congressional record. Following this, Allen argued in support of McMurrin’s recommendations, and reiterated the importance of federal funding toward the teaching of English. After his arguments, the committee members present, Senators Wayne Morse (D-Oregon) and Clifford Case (R-New Jersey), offered their support. Morse, who claimed that he “served 4 years in an English department, both in freshman English and the speech and argumentation courses...” claimed “we have too long overlooked the importance of English to national defense” and also expressed encouragement that the amendment would aid foreign language instruction. Senator Case offered little additional insight, but stated “I have no

⁷⁵ Ibid., 23-24. This quote illustrated McMurrin’s approach to include English studies within larger issues of federally supported language instruction, which was previously relegated to the study of foreign languages. It is relevant and important to note that McMurrin also justified the teaching of English itself.

questions—except to supplement what the chairman has said, I think this is just as important an amendment as you could make at this time to the Education Act.”⁷⁶

The NCTE alerted its members of this Congressional activity with its May 25, 1961, edition of *Council-Grams*. The publication outlines reasons why affiliates should be positive that the NCTE would convince Congress to include English reforms in the revised NDEA. They explained that many politicians were receptive to the idea including President Kennedy and Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Abraham Ribicoff. Also, Senator Lister Hill (D-Alabama) and Representative Cleveland M. Bailey (D-West Virginia) submitted bills supporting the inclusion of English in the Senate and House respectively. Ribicoff was particularly supportive of the effort and echoed McMurrin’s argument that English was “a keystone discipline of the entire learning process, on which hinges the student’s progress in other languages as well as in other parts of the curriculum and without which he cannot use his talents to advantage in his chosen career.” Additionally other organizations were committing support including the American Library Association, the Modern Language Association, and the International Reading Association. Overall, Allen told readers “that members of [the Senate Subcommittee on Education] seemed friendly and that several expressed agreement with the NCTE position.”⁷⁷

Allen further discussed these ideas in front of the House Committee on Education and Labor, six weeks later, over the course of June 7, 8, 13, and 14, in 1961. Again, after

⁷⁶ Ibid., 382

⁷⁷ “National Council of Teachers of English Council-Grams,” 21, No. 4, May 25, 1961, Record Series 15/71/17, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

a similar introduction in front of the Senate committee where he presented a brief background of his position and the mission of the NCTE, Allen requested a copy of *The National Interest and the Teaching of English* be placed in the official Congressional records. Following this, he spoke on the importance of including English within Title VI. His rhetoric was consistent with *The National Interest*, in terms of his equation of the importance of English on par with national defense and the future of America through his claim that in order to progress, “Americans must be able to evaluate what we read and hear, to think straight and express our convictions clearly and effectively.”⁷⁸ Beyond the discussion of the need for better-trained teachers and a stronger curriculum for the teaching of native English speakers, Allen also reiterated the argument for the improvement of the teaching of English for non-native speakers. He claimed that the inclusion of English within Title VI was important because “just as [Title VI] has already so conspicuously aided the development of foreign language study, so it can be similarly successful with English as a foreign language.”⁷⁹ Furthermore, he positioned the importance of this addition with training teachers to instruct English overseas and claimed that aiding instruction for overseas teachers could aid in diplomatic efforts:

I would insist that a competent teacher abroad is worth more than a missile. The sympathetic insights into our history and our culture provided by teachers of English in foreign countries are a more lasting and constructive defense than bombs and rockets.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ House Committee on Education and Labor, National Defense Education Act, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, 757.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

This time, his statements were met with more criticism. Representative Charles Goodell (R-New York) pressed Allen on whether these funds would go toward the teaching of literature. He was aware and agreed with problems in English, but he questioned the value of “the teaching of...poetry and novels and all the rest of it....” While Allen responded that “the greater emphasis would be on the two areas of language and composition” other areas such as world literature would also be affected and available for funds. Goodell contended that placing such areas within the NDEA was unjustifiable. He argued that by including English in Title VI, its study should be limited to practical communication and researched in accordance with the previous work in modern foreign language. Doing otherwise would be indefensible:

...the thing that bothers me is if we are going to authorize that and use Federal funds for that, how are we then going to tell the history teachers that the teaching of literature and poetry is more important than the teaching of history, or the economics teachers that it is more important than economics, or the social studies teachers that it is more important than an understanding of how our Government operates and how they can function as citizens? The act originally recognized science, mathematics, and modern foreign language as being special areas in which we needed a spur in this country for national defense purposes.⁸¹

It is important to note Representative Goodell’s argument. He claimed that teaching English for practical methods such as communication was important. However, if the inclusion of English within the NDEA would fund aesthetic areas of English, then its ability to help matters of national defense was dubious. Furthermore, Goodell had no justification for implicitly elevating English by above other subjects, such as economics and history, if English’s connection to national defense was unclear. This was the problematic position for the NCTE. On one hand they sought to include their subject

⁸¹ Ibid., 759.

within the NDEA by appealing to the national defense arguments popularized by the early years of the Cold War, but they also had to answer to the humanistic, aesthetic aspects of their subject that, by the nature of the bill, would still receive funding.

In his June 13, 1961, Executive Committee Memorandum, Squire summed up his mixed expectations about the chances for the passage of the bill. He expressed dismay over the chances of the bill's inclusion into Title III, but thought Title IV would pass and establish institutes for the teaching of English:

As I write this, Harold Allen is in Washington presenting testimony before the House Subcommittee on Education....I wish I could report that prospects look good for securing an amendment to Title III, but they do not. Our hopes are pinned largely on the Senate passing a bill with English included in Title III and forcing the House into a compromise. The Title VI (institute) amendment looks as if it will pass. Political maneuverings on the NDEA have been almost unbelievable.

Additional disappointing correspondence appeared in the next two months. First was an Executive Committee Memorandum dated June 30, 1961, where Squire pessimistically elaborated on the situation: "I wish I could report something definite concerning the NDEA but politics have so muddied the Washington waters that some informants predict that the house may refuse to pass any extension until early next year."⁸² The NCTE sent news to its members in a similar prognosis. In the September 1,

⁸² James Squire, "Memorandum to the Executive Committee," June 13, 1961, Record Series 15/70/005 Box 1, University of Illinois Archives. Memorandum. In a letter from Squire to Allen dated June 29, 1961, Squire concluded that though they had done what they could, their rhetoric might have been too strong: "I think that we can be proud of our efforts on NDEA. Perhaps we could do better if we had another opportunity but considering our lack of experience, we are doing very well indeed. Letters continue to pour in from Congressmen who are acknowledging the book....I have also heard one or two comments from people who didn't like it – especially the title. It may be that our major emphasis on the problems of English teaching will have to be balanced by more positive reporting." In his June 30th memorandum, Squire echoed the finality of their actions, but claimed they had given it their best attempt. He wrote, "I believe that we have done everything possible. You have read Harold's presentation to one subcommittee and my statement for another. I am trying to obtain a copy of all testimony for each of you. We have sent

1961 *Council-Grams* newsletter, one heading read “Chances Dim for Extension of NDEA—This Year.” The article claimed that the NCTE had done everything it could to convince Congress of the need to include English in the NDEA revisions. Furthermore, the article listed all of the other organizations that supported the effort including the American Library Association, the Modern Language Association, and the American Council on Education. In the end, it did not pass because “members of the House subcommittee, however, expressed some concern about the inclusion of literature in any national program.” Furthermore, the report said that the only bill that did come out of the Senate committee was supplying money for the teaching of English to non-native speakers.⁸³ The endeavor was not completely without hope. As the second part of the heading alluded to nothing passing “This Year,” the newsletter claimed that because the NCTE distributed *The National Interest and the Teaching of English* to all member of Congress, Council members had hopes for English’s inclusion in the near future.

Squire’s feelings came true: even though the authorization of English in title VI of the NDEA was supported by the Senate, it was not approved by the House. However, McMurrin was able to authorize federal money for education through a reworking of Public Law 531. This law, passed in 1954, authorized the commissioner of education to enter agreements with colleges and universities for the purposes of conducting federally

NATIONAL INTEREST to all Congressmen and Senators and there seems to be little more we can do.” See James Squire to Harold Allen, June 29, 1961, Record Series 15/71/001, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

⁸³ “The National Council of Teachers of English Council-Grams,” September 1, 1961, Record Series 15/71/17, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

funded research. Initially, these programs were modestly funded with grants totaling \$600,000 in 1962, but that number increased to \$2,000,000 in 1964.⁸⁴

In spite of being unable to convince Congressional leaders to include English in the NDEA revisions, there was a concerted effort through the executive committee to continue to work toward widespread governmental support. This is epitomized in the 1961 NCTE convention that wrapped up the turbulent, frantic year of the NCTE that included the release of *The National Interest* and Congressional appearances appealing to legislators. In one resolution, the NCTE detailed the problems in the teaching of English through the lens of the report. It held strong to the same language used in the report while conceding that their arguments did not result in the inclusion of English within the revised NDEA. It also acknowledged that the NCTE had made some ground in convincing Congressional leaders of the worthiness of their cause. The resolution claimed that in spite of the omission of English in the NDEA, “it has been shown that these problems [in the teaching of English] cannot be solved without adequate financial support.” Additionally, it argued that there was a Senate bill that made it out of committee and “include[d] provisions for English institutes, support for school libraries, and other significant measures that would improve the teaching of English on a national scale.” Furthermore, the resolution indicated that the Commissioner of Education, Sterling McMurrin also supported reforms in the teaching of English and he “had expressed deep and keen interest in fostering research and planning in regard to the teaching of English through Project English of the Department of Health, Education, and

⁸⁴ Dan Donlan, “Project English (1961-1968): Conception-Birth-Life-Death-and Who Cared?” Education Resources Information Center, (1978), Identifier number ED 175016, 6.

Welfare.” Finally, the resolution argued other groups including those that participated in the Basic Issues report supported NCTE ideas. Ultimately it decided to appeal to “Congress the corrective measures necessary to be taken to eliminate conditions which hinder effective instruction in English” while further dictating “that a copy of this resolution be sent to each senator and representative in the Congress.”⁸⁵

Conclusion

The NCTE underwent organizational changes in the 1950s to make itself the representative of the discipline of the teaching of English. Previously, the NCTE had advocated for its members and attempted to build consensus within its organization while advocating for reforms. Things changed in the 1950s. The NCTE streamlined its organization, increased its membership, and brought itself out of debt. These measures increased its power and ability to speak for issues relevant to the discipline.

In attempting to increase its power, the NCTE also collaborated with the MLA, an organization that historically held opposing viewpoints. Throughout the twentieth century, the MLA was traditionally associated with furthering the interests of college instructors of English. It had little interest in secondary education and even less in elementary English education. This contrasted against the NCTE whose membership primarily consisted of elementary and secondary educators or education professors. The MLA was critical of life adjustment education and other progressive movements of student-centered education. The NCTE, on the other hand, had many outspoken advocates of these movements and proudly promoted its roots in these areas. This

⁸⁵ “Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting,” November 23, 1961, Record Series 15/70/1, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

changed with the Basic Issues Conference of 1958. During these meetings, the NCTE and the MLA reached consensus on basic issues that they claimed demanded attention.

Though this conference did not result in complete unity between the two groups, it did foster a degree of collegial professionalism that continued into the 1960s with additional joint MLA and NCTE efforts over reforming the teaching of English.

The NCTE also shifted its advocacy within the teaching of English. Instead of promoting a curriculum that emphasized the internal experiences of students interacting with literature, the NCTE defined English through a tripod of skills. This shift changed the focus of English from the needs of the student to the defined skills. This definition, which arose from university English instructors and endorsed by the College Entrance Examination Board, reduced the teaching of English to language, literature, and composition. The NCTE followed suit with adopting this model of English. Called the “unholy trinity” by some NCTE members, this conceptualization of English shifted the definition of English supported by NCTE curriculum publications in the early 1950s that defined English as language, literature, speaking, and listening.⁸⁶ Others argued that it unfairly reduced English to a series of skills that neglected the personal experiences between students and texts. These critics claimed that the tripod curriculum prevented students from enjoying literature and reading stories for their own personal benefit.

This period also saw the NCTE embark on lobbying efforts to achieve English’s inclusion in the NDEA. It published *The National Interest and the Teaching of English* that claimed the state of English was in disarray: Teachers were not properly trained, classes were overcrowded, and classes were not rigorous enough. This was problematic

⁸⁶ G. Robert Carlsen, Interview by Alfred Grommon, 11.

because the publication linked these negative issues with crisis of national proportions. Specifically, it claimed that the United States' position in the world was harmed with poor English. The only solution, the report argued, was a large scale, government-funded effort. *The National Interest* recommended that this program should be established in a similar fashion to science and math reforms funded through the original NDEA of 1958. They used *The National Interest* to lobby Congress to include English in the 1961 NDEA revisions by giving each Congressional Representative a copy. Furthermore, the NCTE encouraged its members to use the publication's arguments to construct letters to their own representatives arguing for English's inclusion in the NDEA. Additionally, NCTE members spoke at Congressional hearings on the subject.

Though the NCTE was not successful in convincing Congress to include English in the NDEA, they did persuade Commissioner of Education Sterling McMurrin to allocate funds for the teaching of English. McMurrin was especially swayed by *The National Interest* and its arguments and authorized federal money that went to research in the teaching of English. This program, named Project English, was started in 1961 and funded university-sponsored curriculum research programs and summer training institutes for teachers. In the 1960s, the NCTE continued lobbying efforts and managed to convince Congress to include English in 1964 NDEA revisions. The underlying arguments over student- and subject-centered education arose again during the 1966 Anglo-American Conference on English at Dartmouth. This conference infused British ideas of English instruction with American viewpoints and produced another redefinition

of the subject that more closely resembled early twentieth century incarnations of student-centered education than 1960s post-Sputnik reforms.

CHAPTER FOUR

“THE REVERSAL OF THE PENDULUM”: 1961-1966

In this chapter I explain the effects after the NCTE received initial federal funding in 1961. In essence, the NCTE received money for Project English that paid for curriculum centers, teaching training opportunities, and research into the teaching of English. As the research continued, the NCTE politicized the poor state of the teaching of English with another report, *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English* in 1964. This document, along with additional lobbying efforts, helped English's inclusion into NDEA revisions in 1964. In turn, this spawned more research and more opportunities for teachers trained in the specific disciplinary focus that reflected the tripod curriculum of language, literature, and composition. This research and curricular push continued and culminated with the 1966 Anglo American Conference on English at Dartmouth where English educators from Great Britain, Canada, and the United States met to discuss issues in teaching. Instead of finding similarly thinking educators, many American NCTE members found themselves debating the merits of their reforms against British educators who recommended student-centered curricular goals that more closely matched earlier twentieth century NCTE positions on English. Following this conference, United States teaching reforms in English shifted back toward this earlier time period as represented by the popularity of the student-centered secondary

English elective curriculum reform model adopted during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s.

Project English, 1961-1964

Project English began in 1961. This program established conferences and study centers at colleges and universities to evaluate experimental curriculum research using the tripod curriculum of English as language, literature, and composition.¹ Shortly after the money was allocated, program directors met at the Carnegie Institute of Technology to discuss the overall program goals and to recommend direction. This was 1962 and fresh off memories of the National Defense Education Act reauthorization hearings, there was a spirit of reforming English on par with math and science. Specifically, the three objectives determined for the meeting were: (1) isolate the most pressing research problems in the teaching of English at all levels, (2) assign priorities to them, and (3) describe both applicable research procedures and necessary criteria.²

J.N. Hook epitomized this notion with his introductory paper to the conference. He acted as coordinator of Project English and outlined the importance of funding by claiming that money was needed in the teaching of English just as it was for the strengthening of math, science, and foreign language with the passage of the NDEA. In arguing for this, Hook dismissed previous attempts at English research that was “for the most part, shoestring research, inadequately supported financially and carried on either by inexperienced degree candidates or by teachers already heavily burdened by other

¹ Shugrue, “Project English and Beyond,” 18-21; Donlan, “Project English (1961-1968).”

² U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Needed Research in The Teaching of English: Proceedings of a Project English Research Conference May 5-7 1962* (Washington D.C.: Office of Education Research Monograph no. 11, n.d.), 1.

duties.”³ Additionally, Project English was meant to be a bridge between researchers and practitioners. In an address at the Conference of Chairmen of English Departments in 1962, Ralph Flynt, Associate Commissioner for Educational Research and Development for the U.S. Office of Education placed Project English within an historical pattern of increasing federal involvement in educational issues; particularly educational research. Flynt claimed recent federal leadership in education research had been unable to fully bridge gaps between researchers and practitioners. In spite of research efforts, little had changed in the classroom, which was “as much the result of the ineptness and lack of vision of the researcher as it is the product of the educator’s natural tendency to cling to the security of old and familiar practices.”⁴ This process led to most education research conducted by educational faculty who Flynt argued “have labored valiantly but under great handicaps and, therefore, with distressingly small results.” Compounded with these efforts were criticisms from “the humanities and the natural social scientists” which hampered useful research projects.

Project English’s design was to have English scholars, mostly English professors and researchers, not teachers, develop curriculum and then test them in educational settings to ascertain its effectiveness. After a project was considered useful by the researchers, then it could be distributed to teachers to use in their classrooms. Flynt claimed this last step was the missing piece in education research because it was at this point that the research “must be demonstrated and eventually disseminated to the

³ Ibid., 7.

⁴ Ralph C.M. Flynt, “The U.S. Office of Education Looks at Project English,” *PMLA* 78, no. 4 (1963): 30.

practitioners before research can have any impact on practice.”⁵ Essentially, this pattern favored English faculty in conducting research. English scholars researched these programs; not teachers in the elementary or secondary schools. Furthermore, English education professors were also left out.. In his analysis on four major curriculum centers, University of Nebraska, Carnegie-Mellon University, University of Oregon, and Hunter College, Dan Donlan argued that “universities, scholars, and researchers appeared to be the leaders in the Project English movement,” and that part of this was determined by Public Law 531 that only allowed funding for projects administered by “a university, college or state department of education.”⁶

According to Flynt, Project English occurred because of the NCTE’s lobbying to get federal funding for the teaching of English. As an insider into the process of the NCTE and the discipline of English receiving federal funding toward research, Ralph Flynt, acting Associate Commissioner for Educational Research, possessed a unique perspective. As stated earlier, Flynt saw Project English as a step in a progressively increasing pattern of federal involvement in education. He claimed that though it might have seemed that the federal government first encouraged educational research with the launch of Sputnik and the passage of the NDEA, it began earlier, but definitely accelerated during after WWII and into the 1950s. He cited the method used in Project English with experts in the field conducting research and experimenting with pedagogical methods and then distributing these methods to teachers as similar to those used by the Office of Education and the MLA when funding for foreign language was included with

⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁶ Donlan, “Project English,” 4-6. Teachers were used later in the process “in the preparation and pilot testing of methods and materials.”

the passage of the NDEA in 1958. Flynt argued that because this program was a success with “the benefits of this program [having] reached a substantial proportion in the United States,” research into the teaching of English was to be carried out in a similar way. Flynt summarizing his reasoning by claiming “in an endeavor to help the teaching of English as we have helped instruction in foreign language, mathematics, and the sciences, the Office of Education in 1962 established Project English.” Additionally, he argued English lobbyists had help from key insiders including Abraham Ribicoff, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare; Sterling McMurrin, Commissioner of Education; and President Kennedy. All of them supported additional educational research.⁷

Early 1960s NCTE positions from the Basic Issues Conference, *The National Interest and The Teaching of English*, and NCTE member statements submitted before Congress predicated arguments for additional funding on the poor state of the teaching of English. Some NCTE members saw Project English as a helpful step to correct correct these issues. Joseph Mersand wrote in 1964 that Project English made substantial changes in the teaching of English, because in order for English to improve and make teachers better, a number of objectives should be met including improving the “woefully inadequate” preservice education for English teachers and including more technology in

⁷ Flynt, “The U.S. Office of Education Looks at Project English,” 31. Flynt cited Ribicoff as having “referred to English as the ‘keystone’ of American Education,” and Sterling McMurrin “expressed repeated concern for the improvement of instruction in English, while emphasizing the role of the Office in conducting research and disseminating information without any desire to create a national curriculum.” Though Flynt does not cite Kennedy as commenting specifically on the importance of English, he quotes him as saying “education in this country is the right—the necessity—and the responsibility of all. Its advancement is essential to national objectives and dependent on the greater financial resources available at the national level.” See *Ibid.*, 31.

the classroom. Project English was designed to meet some of those objectives.⁸

Additionally, Flynt, envisioned Project English to develop “a new, articulated English curriculum,” to be designed by “English scholars and educators...devoted substantially to language, composition, and literature.” This was necessary in his mind because he claimed “we must avoid the cluttered sequence of courses which today is sometimes called ‘English.’”⁹

Project English produced a great amount of research, but there is debate as to how much of that was actually transferred to classroom methods. Albert Kitzhaber, 1964 NCTE President and director of the Project English sponsored University of Oregon curriculum study center, conceded that even if their research did not accomplish everything they wanted, it still made a substantial, relatively inexpensive contribution to the English curriculum:

I think that the government made a good bargain. For less than two million dollars—which would be perhaps a twenty per cent down payment on a single warplane—the seven Centers have all made important contributions to a better English curriculum.¹⁰

Though some representatives within the NCTE welcomed this federal funding, others thought that the spirit behind the research conducted in these curriculum centers was too rigid. George Carlsen and James Crow critiqued the study centers and the materials they produced. They ultimately argued that the centers were limited in

⁸ Joseph Mersand, “The Secondary School Principal, The English Program, and Project English,” *NASSP Bulletin* 48 (1964) 53.

⁹ Ralph C.M. Flynt, “The U.S. Office of Education Looks at Project English,” 32.

¹⁰ Kitzhaber, “The Government and English Teaching,” 139. Kitzhaber also cited specific curriculum additions disseminated to school and included an overall spirit of uniformity between English educators in studying English within the Tripod Definition.

producing applicable, valuable classroom research. Specifically, the centers produced work in an overtly regimented form that viewed teachers as disseminators of education and students as passive receivers. Instead of students working to develop their own path through an inductive approach to education, curriculum planners determined the learned skill and instructed students to reach those goals.¹¹ Furthermore, they were concerned that the research ignored skill-based applications of the subject. Instead of considering the functional aspects of the teaching of English, the centers assumed an inherent nature to the studying of English. Carlsen and Crow countered this position and claimed that “the general public supports the teaching of English because it thinks English will teach boy and girls how to spell, punctuate, write a decent sentence, and avoid misuse of a sub-dialect. No matter what the profession believes is the providence of English, the public puts these things first.” Furthermore, the trends as demonstrated by the work from the curriculum centers represented a return “to the attitudes of the nineteenth century” because of the research output favored auxiliary topics over the underlying aspects of grammar.¹² This argument is important. Carlsen and Crow placed this movement within wider 1960s educational issues. Educational research trends posited teachers within lesser roles in their classrooms. As evidenced by educational programs administered and funded

¹¹ Carlsen and Crow wrote “Teaching is the act of communication in the literal meaning of the word. It is the process of bringing the student into the commune of the subject matter, helping him to share in common with other people the riches offered by the individual discipline. But in the proposed lesson plans, teaching seems to be conceived as a question and answer process in which the teacher asks and the students answer.” See G. Robert Carlsen and James Crow, “Project English Curriculum Centers,” *The English Journal* 56, no. 7 (1962): 992. Carlsen would later explain that his review of Project English was unpopular: “Some years later I was asked to review and evaluate the outcomes of the curriculum centers. I did as honest job as I could, but unfortunately had more negative things to say than positive. As a result my presentation was far from popular since the Council had so hoped that something significant might come from the projects. However, in the long run, the centers have had little effect on the directions of the teaching of English during the seventies.” See G. Robert Carlsen, Interview by Alfred Grommon, 2.

¹² Carlsen and Crow, “Project English Curriculum Centers,” 991.

by the federal government, scholars and active researchers in the fields of their disciplines produced curriculum dispersed directly into classrooms. Teachers were left out. Carlsen and Crow argued against this type of research that removed the autonomous decision making of the elementary and secondary school teacher. Additionally, this pattern removed education professors from education research and left curriculum planning to discipline experts. In essence, Carlsen and Crow, viewed Project English as part of the wave of discipline-centered reforms similar to the fate of math and science after the passing of the NDEA in 1958.

Additional Appeals for Federal Funding, 1962-1964

In the early 1960s, the NCTE continued their quest to achieve broad federal funding for reform in the teaching of English. Using similar methods to earlier attempts, the NCTE armed themselves with new data and research. They published resources to raise support for English research funding through similar methods from *The National Interest* and *The Teaching of English*. In 1964 they produced *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers* that claimed preservice teachers and teachers currently in school were not receiving an adequate education and this adversely affected American students. In addition to disseminating this information, the NCTE also appealed to Congress for inclusion into the 1964 NDEA reauthorization. Using *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English* as a framework for their arguments, prominent NCTE officers spoke before Congress and requested additional funding. They presented their argument in two ways. First, they highlighted strides accomplished in Project English centers. These centers, they argued, contributed research that reflected growing changes in the field of English. Second, they stressed that

without federal funding, they were unable to fully use the research. Therefore, without Congress funding additional programs in English, teachers would not be able to use Project English materials and the poor state of English would continue in American schools.

As Project English centers were continuing to produce research, the NCTE sought additional federal funding through lobbying. Ultimately, it wanted English's inclusion into the NDEA, an issue that proved elusive during the 1961 NDEA reauthorization hearings. In the 1962 annual report, Squire summarized legislative lobbying efforts over the previous year including "testifying before a Senate subcommittee" and distributing NCTE position statements to state-level English programs. Within this overall process, Squire warned that these measures were helpful but insufficient in convincing legislators to pass sweeping reforms in English.

The effectiveness of such communications cannot be overemphasized. The Council has been informed that many legislators recognize the special need of our subject and are "friendly" toward legislation supporting research and institutes in English. However, the problems of steering such legislation through the political turmoil surrounding all aid to education remain to be solved.¹³

The 1963 Annual Report detailed similar success. Squire claimed that Project English was a formidable start, however "large scale national support for English is not yet available." Squire's strategy was simple: pressure legislators and the media to consider the problems within the teaching of English. He valued this strategy and claimed that attention to their cause was "increasingly apparent in discussions in the Congress and the popular press." As in the previous year's Annual Report, he detailed NCTE

¹³ James Squire "Annual Reports of Officers and Committees," 1962, Record Series 15/70/2, Box 2, University of Illinois Archives.

leadership testifying before Congress and valued their help. Additionally, he called for increased support from all of its members including local affiliates “in continuing to call the needs of our profession to the attention of local, regional, and national political and economic leaders [as it] remains one of our continuing responsibilities.”¹⁴

Squire’s promoted this strategy to individuals concerned with a lack of large scale national funding for the teaching of English. In one letter, Sister M. Daniel Joseph, an instructor at Ladycliff College, wrote to the NCTE national office searching for funding designed for NCTE members to attend summer institutes. She was “weary of watching the mathematicians and scientists go off every summer to the ends of the earth, all expenses paid.” Squire replied that everyone in the NCTE “share[s] your concern over the imbalance in grants which seize our Federal Government supporting the sciences to the extent of \$40,000,000 and not expending one cent for the reeducation of teachers of English and the humanities.” He detailed Council efforts in testifying before Congress, and additionally encouraged Sister Joseph to campaign on her own. As he suggested, “no doubt it would help matters considerably if you and some of your friends would write letters of support to your representatives in Washington for the provisions of the Education Bill which deal with institutes for teachers in subject matter fields.”

Through producing *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English* in 1964, the NCTE worked to reproduce the success they felt they accomplished with *The National Interest and the Teaching of English* in 1961.¹⁵ Though

¹⁴ James Squire “Annual Reports of Officers and Committees,” 1963, Record Series 15/70/02, Box 2, University of Illinois Archives.

¹⁵ They also planned to use *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English* in their Congressional testimonies because Squire claimed “It is almost impossible for us to prepare testimony

somewhat limiting because they did not succeed in adding English within the NDEA in 1961, NCTE officials felt that the first report brought much needed attention to problems in the teaching of English. In constructing this publication, the NCTE engaged again in research production specifically designed to adhere to their lobbying efforts. Squire wrote NCTE member Helen Olsen requesting she supply her previous research on the problems of supervising English on the state level. He apologized for a short deadline, but claimed swiftness was necessary to ready the publication for Congressional testimony. He told Olsen “you have a lot of basic data, we know the urgency of the need, and probably you yourself could pull together much of this material because you are used to preparing reports of this kind.”¹⁶

There were four main arguments in *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English*, each building upon the other and culminating in recommending additional federal funding. Though unlike the previous 1961 arguments where they aligned the poor state of the teaching of English with national, widespread disadvantages, this time they primarily framed the negative consequences within educational issues.

Their first argument was that there were “inadequacies in preservice preparation.” Here, the NCTE asserted that many pre-service English teachers did not receive the proper skills needed to teach English. Their argument was bolstered with statistics from the United States Office of Education that claimed “24 percent of the total instruction

in advance because the sections that we may be called to testify on are apt to vary depending on what Congress does.” See James Squire to Albert Kitzhaber, January 18, 1964, Record Series 15/71/001, Box 5, University of Illinois Archives.

¹⁶ James Squire to Helen F. Olsen, December 19, 1962, Record Series 15/71/10, Box 9, University of Illinois Archives.

time in kindergarten through grade 12 is spent on some form of instruction in English and language arts, more than in any other subject area.”¹⁷ In spite of this time length, the NCTE-sponsored research surveys found that many educators received little training in English, and many teachers did not possess a major in English. Additionally, few secondary English teachers who responded claimed that they were comfortable teaching the elements of English: “half (51.9) of the secondary teachers consider themselves well prepared to teach literature; slightly more than one third (36.6 percent), to teach composition; slightly more than half (53.5 percent), to teach the English language.”¹⁸

The NCTE’s second argument in *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English* explained that rampant “inadequate inservice education” decreased innovation in the classroom. In spite of high numbers of educators who “expressed interest” in learning about modern instructional methods in English, the report argued that many teachers could not afford to attend inservice programs, which further reduced the applicability of its research. As the NCTE concluded, newly researched methods of English could only appear in classrooms “if teachers were thoroughly informed about them.”¹⁹

The NCTE additionally argued that there was “inadequate supervision and instructional leadership” in overseeing English. This lack of supervision translated to poor organization of English courses. They likened this lack of state-level supervisors in English to the subjects of math, science, and foreign language just before the passage of

¹⁷ The Committee on National Interest of The National Council of Teachers of English, *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English: A Report on the Status of the Profession* (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1964), 4.

¹⁸ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁹ Ibid., 7.

the NDEA. In the four years following this 1958 act, the numbers increased dramatically. This was one avenue that the report claimed leadership could be established in English. Furthermore, there were not many opportunities for teachers to acquire further education. Many had no contact with other English teachers, local colleges, or researchers, all of whom could provide further instructional assistance.

They concluded on “the importance of institutes in English,” and claimed that many teachers would attend institutes if given additional financial support. In presenting this argument, the NCTE appealed again to the post-NDEA results in math, science, and foreign language. They argued that a high number of teachers attended programs in these areas following the passage of the NDEA that financed aid for educators to attend. Due to these results, “only an annual program on a nationwide scale” would address these problems. And due to the large cost needed to fund such a wide-scale endeavor, “a program of this magnitude seems to be possible only with federal assistance.”²⁰

These arguments reflected the NCTE’s multiple positions on English during this era. As mentioned previously, the NCTE consistently argued during the late 1950s and early 1960s that the teaching of English should focus on specific skills and reflect expertise in content areas. Instead of working with students to discover experiences in literature, as advocated by earlier, twentieth century NCTE statements that reflected a student-centered perspective on education, new arguments claimed teachers should impart specific knowledge to students and represented a content-centered perspective. In order to accomplish this, teachers should have the proper English background to achieve classroom success. For example, within their first argument in *The National Interest and*

²⁰ Ibid., 9.

the Continuing Education of Teachers of English they claimed that most elementary had an education major instead of an English degree. The NCTE implicitly argued this was inferior: Success was reflected in those educators that had specific content training in the teaching of English. Those with training in education were grouped with the unprepared and signified poor training.

Furthermore, the arguments clearly reflected a petition to receive federal aid. This was the shortest and quickest method and also reflected previous successful rhetoric from other subjects. The publication first framed the problem of inadequacies in English classrooms due to new research methods not used in classrooms. The research was there and classroom teachers wanted training, the narrative claimed, but there was not funding to help them receive the training. The NCTE then claimed this problem could be solved through similar successful mechanisms used in mobilizing research to teachers in math, science, and foreign language. The only component missing was the federal government presenting aid similar to the NDEA. Furthermore, English skills were needed to help students advance in math, science, and foreign language. Without these skills, students would not reach their potential and implicitly, and the funds allocated for additional research and instruction in these areas would be wasted:

Any achievement beyond elementary oral drills in foreign language learning, beyond rudimentary computation in mathematics, beyond rote memorization and simple recall in the social and natural sciences requires the ability to read complex material with comprehension, to organize thoughts and express them clearly, and to contribute to and profit from listening to the exchange of mature ideas in open discussion.²¹

This is an important idea. It asserted the importance English, and it reinforced the premise that this report acted as a petition to policymakers to receive additional federal

²¹ Ibid., 177.

funding. Even if the goals specific to the teaching of English were negligible the arguments found in *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English* could still stand because English skills were transferable and necessary to succeed in other subjects.

As another indication of the report's distance from earlier periods of NCTE positions, an appendix recommending instructional texts in the teaching of English omitted earlier policy documents. This might reflect contemporary research; many of the listed titles were published in the late 1950s and early 1960s. However, when this list is placed against the tenets and philosophy of the committee that produced this report and additional policy statements from this era of NCTE leadership, this omission signified a turn away from the progressive concepts from earlier curriculum documents. The goals from the reorganization report were not mentioned. The experience curriculum advocated by Hatfield was left out.

If the overall arguments seem similar to *The National Interest and the Teaching of English*, it is in part due to the same authors. The chairman of the "Committee on National Interest" was James Squire, author of the first *National Interest* and NCTE executive secretary during their push for reform during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Other committee members were also veterans at lobbying Congress. Harold Allen, another member on the committee, testified before Congress during NDEA reauthorization in 1961. George Winchester Stone former Executive Secretary of the MLA did the same. Another reason for similarities in the arguments was because the NCTE worked within the same construct that allowed it to gain money for Project English. The publication presented research on the poor state of the teaching of English,

and claimed that the problem could only be solved through federal funding. However, with this publication the NCTE had a record of teachers attending summer Project English institutes. So, these figures bolstered potential rewards of federal involvement: if Congress financed the institutes, teachers would attend.²²

Along with this publication, NCTE officials also lobbied Congress. In a 1977 interview, 1964 NCTE president Albert Kitzhaber, listed NDEA revisions as one of the most “important achievements during [his] term as president” and claimed “I did a good deal of lobbying for this” and along with James Squire was “invited to the White House in October 1964 to see Lyndon Johnson sign S. 3060 which accomplished the broadening of NDEA to include English.”²³ Furthermore, in his presidential statement in the 1964 Annual NCTE report, Kitzhaber contended that “the Council has been extremely active in conveying its point of view to key members of the Congress on the extension and expansion of the National Defense Education Act,” and argued that “many members of the Council were instrumental in making their attitudes known to the Congress in securing passage.... The Council can derive great satisfaction from its key role in helping to secure passage of the bill.”²⁴ Squire felt similar. In a letter to Kitzhaber, Squire detailed the surety of English’s inclusion in the NDEA and argued that “it is interesting that we apparently made our case with Mrs. Green,” and additionally added that all members of

²² The report claimed “among all English and language arts teachers responding nationally, 76 percent said they were interested in taking a summer of inservice course if financial assistance were available. State and local agencies need to be encouraged to develop and support inservice programs for teachers, but federal support for an institute program seems to be indispensable at this point to make financial assistance possible for English teachers.” See *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers*, 9.

²³ Kitzhaber wrote in 1977 that he “still had the pen [President Johnson] gave me.” See Albert Kitzhaber to Robert Hogan, July 9, 1977, Box SG-01, National Council of Teachers of English Archives.

²⁴ Albert Kitzhaber, NCTE Annual Report, 1964, Record Series 15/70/02, Box 2, University of Illinois Archives.

the committee possessed copies of *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers*.²⁵

Specifically, Kitzhaber's lobbying attempts equated reform in the teaching of English to reform in the teaching of math and science. This strategy was very familiar to the NCTE who attempted the same method three years earlier in the 1961 NDEA reauthorization hearings. In these testimonies, as I pointed out in the last chapter, NCTE officials likened a poor state of English instruction with a national emergency. Kitzhaber and other NCTE officials continued this strategy in claiming that the teaching of English needed money for research, but they additionally argued that money was needed in the form of curriculum study centers. They contended that nothing would change in schools without additional money.

One example of this lobbying is found in a letter from Kitzhaber to Congressional Representative Edith Green (D-Oregon). Kitzhaber claimed that omitting English from NDEA reauthorization was detrimental because it "exclude[d] English, the subject basic to instruction in all other subjects." He sought to place English on par with other subjects and highlighted problems with emphasizing math and science over English. He argued that math, science, and foreign language teachers have had an unfair advantage in learning new advances in their curricula fields and researchers in those subjects had the time and money to make advancements. Forgetting English, Kitzhaber argued in rhetoric similar to his NCTE lobbying predecessors, was detrimental to the country because it created an illiterate electorate not "sufficiently in command of the skills of language to

²⁵ James Squire to Albert Kitzhaber, July 6, 1964, 15/71/001, Box 5, University of Illinois Archives.

distinguish between truth, partial truth, and falsehood, and to vote accordingly.”²⁶

Furthermore, the teaching of literature was vital:

A familiarity with the accumulated wisdom and values and knowledge of mankind embodied in great literature is one of the surest means of keeping a sane and balanced perspective, not only on our privileges and duties as Americans but on our rights and obligations as human beings. It is necessary to survive—but it is also necessary to know what we are surviving for.²⁷

In continuing his argument that placed the teaching of English on equal funding with other subjects, Kitzhaber felt that the NCTE had made some advancements in English research with Project English, but these accomplishments paled in comparison to programs in math and science. He directly cited Zacharias and the Physical Sciences Study Committee that had “something like 7 1/2 million dollars” and could “employ many of the leading physicists in the United States including several Nobel laureates” while Project English had “250,000 [and] whatever local funds may be contributed by the host institution” and used “graduate students and assistant professors” to facilitate their research.²⁸ Moreover, Zacharias’ program was limited to the development of one course while the NCTE sought to develop a more expansive fifth through twelfth grade curriculum.

Kitzhaber’s final plea claimed that without additional money, the cutting edge curricula developed by English specialists would not make it into the classrooms. He argued that teachers were not prepared to teach it: they did not understand the material

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Albert Kitzhaber to Edith Green, Feb 13, 1964, Record Series 15/71/001, Box 5, University of Illinois Archives.

²⁸ Ibid.

and would need additional training in order to present it to students. Without this money, there would be a gulf between research and student learning:

In the last quarter of a century there has been a genuine revolution in the study of the English language, including its grammar, in literary criticism and interpretation, and to a lesser extent in rhetoric and logic. A new and improved curriculum in English, comparable to a new mathematics curriculum, must take these new developments into account. The nation's children are ill-served when they are given outdated and inaccurate information when better is at hand.²⁹

In 1964, provisions of the NDEA were extended to finance instruction of English and other subjects including history and geography.³⁰ This also funded thousands of teachers to attend NDEA sponsored institutes and learn new pedagogical strategies to use themselves or to disseminate to their colleagues.³¹ Similar to previous Squire messages to affiliates, in the 1964 Annual Report encouraged NCTE members to continue to push for continued success. Though, unlike past reports, this message was not meant to encourage interest in steering legislation through Congressional committees. Instead, this report spoke of relief and responsibility to productively use the rewards of their past efforts because this period reflected “a time when the American people, through their representatives in the Congress, seem to have awakened to the importance of English and the humanities.” The NCTE felt that the NDEA’s inclusion of English symbolized equanimity to math, science, and foreign language, so his concluding message was hopeful and encouraging as English seemed to be entering a renewed, exciting period of research:

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Arno Jewett, “NDEA Now Includes English and Reading,” *The English Journal* 53, no. 8 (1964): 580.

³¹ Shugrue, “Project English and Beyond,” 18-21.

The vigor in the Council reflects the vigor in our total subject field, and can lead us during the years ahead to achieving a stronger professional association and, above all, a stronger curricular program in English than we have ever imagined.³²

The Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth, 1966

Certainly I was told more than once that there really had been during the past decade a radical shift in the whole mood of American education. Some aspects of this shift can be observed in the context of Project English; it seems more violent than anything which we have experienced.³³

George Allen, staff inspector of the United Kingdom Department of Education, made that remark at the conclusion of a month-long tour of American schools in 1966. Among his arguments on the differences in the teaching of English between American and British schools, Allen felt that the United States had experienced a great shift in how they researched and taught English courses that could be characterized as a “pendulum...swung too far the other way in a reaction against the vagueness of an earlier teaching pattern over-emphasizing social adjustment.”³⁴ In speaking of the trends in English reform during the late 1950s and early 1960s, Kitzhaber, a supporter and architect of these reforms that Allen criticized, wrote those were “a major reform movement that comes perhaps once in a generation” and detailed specific changes including the federal involvement in granting money for curriculum centers and strengthened college English programs. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of an English conference between American, British, and Canadian educators. In his opinion,

³² James Squire, 1964 Annual Report, Record Series 15/70/02, Box 2, University of Illinois Archives.

³³ Robert Hogan, “As Other See Us: An Interview After the Fact,” *English Journal* 55, no. 5 (1966): 535.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 537.

the “two reports to come from it should be very influential.”³⁵ Kitzhaber was right in the influence of those reports and of the overall conference. The 1966 Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth College is regarded by many as a watershed moment in English education.

The Anglo-American Conference in English at Dartmouth College was the first major international conference designed specifically to discuss and form opinions about the teaching of English. Established and funded by the Carnegie Foundation to bring together English educators from Canada, England, and the United States it was sponsored by the NCTE; the Modern Language Association; and the British equivalent of the NCTE, the National Association for the Teachers of English. This conference allowed attendants to converge and present their own perspectives in an attempt to meld general recommendations that could be used to guide future English educational decisions. In short, the conference forced American English researchers and curriculum planners to reexamine their views and opinions about the subject because of their interaction with British conference attendants.³⁶

The shift in American thinking over English education over the previous eight years, as indicated by the tone in post-Sputnik publications, was starkly different from the British perspective. In British education, English was not limited by practical concerns.

³⁵ Albert Kitzhaber, “NCTE Councilletter: A Time of Change,” *The English Journal* 55, no. 7 (1966): 909, 911.

³⁶ In framing my analyses specific to the conference, I draw from three major sources. The first is the widely quoted work, *Growth Through English*, by John Dixon. This work is an account of the conference from the lens of a British educator and is designed for the teaching profession. The other work I rely on is *The Uses of English* by Herbert J. Muller. This work, written from an American educator, is proclaimed by the author as “designed for the general reader.” The third major source is the actual study papers used at the conference made available via the ERIC archives and other published works.

In the comparative study of British English education, *Teaching English in the United Kingdom*, American researchers, James Squire and Roger Applebee concluded that outside of preparing for external examinations, there was little in English pedagogy that required the teaching of rhetoric or formal grammar. Conversely, there was a major emphasis on creativity, speech and oral expression, and the personal growth of the student. Furthermore, the British English curriculum was highly decentralized which provided for individual schools to try pedagogical techniques that suited their students. As Applebee and Squire noted, “so long as a school program can ensure that a reasonable percentage of pupils will pass...examinations, [the schools] can experiment at will.”³⁷

According to an account of the conference from American participant Herbert Muller, conflict started with the first study topic: “What is English?” The dominating American view of defining English was to look at developing standards, a primary curriculum, and syllabus to meet the definitions. This notion fit within the recent American perspective on content-centered education, however this was counter to the British viewpoint that pressed for more freedom within the definition of English. From the British opinion, to define “What is English?” one should examine the necessary goals for an English teacher. As Muller characterized the situation, “The British translated the question, ‘What is English?’ into the operational question, ‘What should an English teacher do?’”³⁸ Throughout his account, Muller highlighted this debate. The British pushed toward freedom in their curriculum, he argued, because they reacted against post-

³⁷ Roger K Applebee and James R Squire, *Teaching English in the United Kingdom* (Champaign, IL, National Council of Teachers of English, 1969), 244.

³⁸ Herbert Joseph Muller, *The Uses of English: Guidelines for the Teaching of English from the Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth College* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), 13.

secondary entrance examinations that rigidly prescribed teaching methods that would yield success on these exams while the American attendants reacted against excesses associated with life adjustment education and that, according to some, espoused relatively less discipline in the classroom. Ideally, both sides sought to achieve an equal balance of freedom and discipline.³⁹

NCTE member James Miller presented this initial argument as a clash of ideal that established a disparate tone for the rest of the conference. Miller claimed the American attendees were confident of their answer as to the definition of English due to their position that defined English as the tripod of language, literature, and composition. As recounted in the previous chapter, this definition was proposed by the Commission on English of the College Entrance Examination Board and accepted by the major documents of the NCTE. Additionally, Project English materials developed materials based on this definition of English. According to Miller, after Americans presented their definition as the tripod, British representatives were unimpressed. With a tone of exaggerated humor, Miller argued that Americans thought the British would have the opposite effect. He claimed he thought that after viewing Project English curricular materials, “the British would fill their wheelbarrows with these materials, cart them away for further study, and come back converted” to the American ideas of English. This did not happen. Instead, Miller claimed “the British merely circled about the materials, sniffed at them, flipped through a few pages now and then, and departed with pursed lips and slightly glazed eyes.” In Miller’s mind, they were clearly unimpressed.

³⁹ Ibid.

The issue of teaching composition proved to be a major area of conflict. American teaching styles viewed a more pragmatic approach to writing, seeing value in technical aspects of composition, while the British respondents at the conference viewed writing as a much more intimate, creative connection between the author and his work.

Additionally, the American method of writing instruction explicitly linked teaching skills and rhetorical theories that would transfer writing techniques to students. In other words, the students would learn the proper way to write and then adapt their own writing to that format. This was very different from the British method that took a more student-centered inductive approach to writing.⁴⁰ This inductive style of writing became known as the growth method, because of it viewed writing as a budding process for the student complexly connected between an individual and his world reflecting a shared experience as opposed to a fixed method of skills that students would acquire and utilize.⁴¹

Another issue discussed was the need for increased creativity in the classroom. Bridging toward this previously mentioned inductive method of learning, a need emerged to promote student creativity in order to spur compositions. Prior to this conference, creativity, Muller argued, was not something explicitly encouraged in American schools past early grades because it was considered impractical. On the contrary, many British schools used creativity routinely in their classrooms.⁴² The creativity process used in British schools relied heavily on how educators portrayed drama in the classroom. They defined this idea generally as the classroom interactions between teacher and students,

⁴⁰ Ibid., 102.

⁴¹ John Dixon, *Growth through English* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1967), 6.

⁴² Muller, *The Uses of English*, 116.

but which could also include pantomime, improvisation, and speech. This notion of drama necessitated that student teacher interaction was important aspect in the learning process. More specifically, the ability to participate in theatrical aspects reflected a basic understanding of language and using drama as a teaching strategy aimed at developing writing skills helped students actively learn language as opposed to passively reacting to writing.⁴³ James Moffett, an American educator who later produced extremely influential works on the teaching of writing and contributed to the formation of the National Writing Project, summed up the British viewpoint of drama within inductive teaching by recommending that dramatic acting can lead to future understanding of narrative, exposition, and argumentative writing.⁴⁴ This notion aligned itself with the earlier discussion centering on the differing views of defining English. In the British context, the definition was primarily concerned with the learning process of the child as opposed to transferring skills necessary to achieve success.

Squire recounted a general feeling of intensity from the conference. He claimed “the seminar itself was an intense, difficult, major experience for anyone who care deeply about the teaching of English in the schools. Most of my own basic assumptions about teaching were questioned in one way or another and, at the vary least, I think I (and others) emerged with new perspectives on what we are attempting to do.” He additionally remarked, as others had claimed, that “there were differences-and basic ones-not only between the United Kingdom and the United States, but between different groups at the Seminar.” In spite of these disagreements, he did concede that “the group did achieve

⁴³ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 109.

much general agreement, and although some of the recommendations seem to run counter to many present developments, I believe they can become a force for greater flexibility in the profession.”⁴⁵

Miller portrayed similar agreements, but not before presenting numerous accounts of differing opinions between the two groups. At the heart of his recollections of these conflicts are diverging notions of the relationship between students and society. The American perspective claimed that a skill-based curriculum was needed in order to adapt students to a functional curriculum. For example, speaking Standard English was needed in order for students to acquire a career. In order to facilitate students learning these skills, Miller claimed that the American perspective structured their education through a progression of curricula that reflected these goals. In English’s case, the skills that these goals were linked to were within the tripod definition of English: language, literature, and composition. To Miller, the British perspective was student centered. Instead of advocating a specific, sequential curriculum, the British recommended teachers build experiences to develop student knowledge. Miller colorfully recollected this debate between British and American participants as dramatically distant on the concepts of the relation between the student and the curriculum:

What about teaching students standard English? Goodness! Leave their language along. Shouldn’t they be taught composition in order to communicate? Horrors! Give them opportunities to be imaginative, creative, to express and discover themselves, their honest, deep-down, genuine selves. But shouldn’t the great literary heritage be preserved and taught [to] them for their and the culture’s edification? Rubbish! Let them read what interests them, what they want to read, what is relevant to their various interests. Moreover, children should not be *taught*; they should be provided environments and experiences in which they may learn-in their own way and at their own pace. Teachers should never do more than

⁴⁵ James Squire, Memo to Executive Committee, September 19, 1966, Record Series 15/70/005, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives.

occasionally *nudge* the child along. What about a sequential curriculum? The only sequence that makes sense is the sequence of individual experiences of individual children; throw out all the plans and structures imposed from outside, and let the children discover their own curriculum by creating their own experiences.⁴⁶

Many participants felt that the act of bringing together of educators was a positive idea and encouraged additional communication. In 1971, Dan Donlan researched the effects of Dartmouth through interviews with participants made five years after the conference. He concluded that attendees thought the meeting established valuable communication. The 1960s was a period of rapid social change. Establishing a pattern for discussing pertinent educational issues was an important step in itself. Furthermore, some felt Dartmouth's issues continued within participant discussions after the conference ended. Casual meetings between those who attended the conference would inevitably turn to the topics of Dartmouth months after it happened.⁴⁷

Yet, others concluded that the effects of implementing the Dartmouth ideas were minimal at best and disastrous at worst. The reforms never happened for different reasons including lack of funding as compared to Project English, the federally sponsored initiative for increased allotments to increase English education, or because many teachers remained true to their traditional teaching methods and implicitly rejected the radical propositions Dartmouth's recommendations. Kitzhaber felt that the conference resulted in a new form of progressive education that resembled the teaching of English

⁴⁶ James E. Miller, "What Happened at Dartmouth," *Harvard Educational Review* 40, no. 4 (1970): 647.

⁴⁷ Dan Donlan, "A Backward Glance at Dartmouth," *English Education* 5, no. 3 (March, 1974): 189-194.

from earlier decades⁴⁸ and he scaled down his involvement in the NCTE following

Dartmouth because after that conference, the NCTE “became kind of silly”:

The articles, the programs and so forth was full of this feely stuff, this what shall I say, this _____ of progressive education, in some of its worst forms, and I was too old to go through that again, and I knew it would wear out, and it has, but for a time there I found the journals very tedious, I must say I still don’t enjoy it very much of what I read in *College English*, and I dropped *English Journal* because I couldn’t stand to read it anymore.⁴⁹

Wayne O’Neil, conference attendant, lamented at what Dartmouth could have been, but he concluded that it was a waste of money because of the abstract conversations and disregard for explicit educational planning:

The Dartmouth conference could have aimed high, it could have tried to offer a blueprint for education in the Anglo-American countries. Instead it narrowed itself to talk about nothing. In so proceeding it misconceived what it is that needs doing and along the way wasted a good deal of public (Carnegie) money. Its ‘findings’ should be ignored.⁵⁰

Regardless of the educational perspective of the conference, this event was pivotal in creating dialogue from an inter-continental perspective. Michael F. Shugrue, former president of the College English Association and consultant at the conference argued “in retrospect, the Dartmouth Conference stimulated new thinking about the English curriculum, gave new currency to and supplied new definitions for such terms as creativity and drama, and emphasized the social responsibilities of the English teacher in American society.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Dan Donlan, “A Backward Glance at Dartmouth,” 193.

⁴⁹ Albert Kitzhaber to Robert Hogan, July 9, 1977, Box SG-01, Box 5, National Council of Teachers of English Archives. The blank spot is present in the transcripts. No explanation is given.

⁵⁰ Wayne A. O’Neil, “Conference Report, Dartmouth Seminar” *Harvard Educational Review* 39, no. 2 (1969): 365.

⁵¹ Michael F. Shugrue, *English in a Decade of Change* (New York: Pegasus, 1968) 78.

New Directions in the English Curriculum, 1966-1980

The mid 1960s brought new educational goals. The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act brought unseen amounts of federal money into schools. Additionally, the Civil Rights movement focused attention on the role of the minority in education reform. With the advent of these new educational goals, the burgeoning subject-centered movement in English was eclipsed by the problems of the economically disadvantaged child. In 1964, the NCTE created a Task Force on Teaching English to the Disadvantaged that advocated creative instructional methods and culturally relevant literature selections.⁵² Muriel Crosby, first vice-president of the NCTE, argued that English teachers were in a unique role to help disadvantaged students because “their subject is basic to the students’ personal and academic success.”⁵³ On a larger scale, Crosby called for council-wide change to address this, the “most crucial problems faced by schools today.” Without this support the NCTE would cease to be a leader in education. Additional articles in *The English Journal* reflected this opinion. In the April 1965 edition, they dedicated their issue to ways in which English teachers could help

⁵² Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 226-227.

⁵³ Muriel Crosby, “NCTE Councilletter,” *The English Journal* 54, no. 3 (1965): 236. Crosby explained a further link between “disadvantaged students” and English. She claimed that “the disadvantaged child usually lacks experiences which give meaning to language. His own developing language power has been blocked in his preschool years, for conversations, stories, and books are often unavailable. Family dialects, while sometimes dynamic and forceful, are different from informal standard English in vocabulary, style, structure, and in the important nonverbal aspects of communication accompanying speech. In addition, the disadvantaged child is frequently economically deprived with all that this means in terms of physical, mental, and emotional health. In fact, the typical disadvantaged child upon entrance to kindergarten evidences a language lag of two or more years. He is handicapped in academic learning at the outset and his language lag tends to increase as he proceeds through school. This is the child who waits, hopefully, for his sixteenth birthday to be released from a school that has become unbearable,” See Crosby, “NCTE Councilletter,” 236.

disadvantaged students.⁵⁴ In his 1965 presidential address, Richard Corbin also addressed the problem. Though the task force was created quickly, little had been accomplished. The education of disadvantaged students was the one “*burning* issue” facing English teachers because English teachers were more apt to help these students who “have some command of our standard dialect and who [have] had some ‘moving’ experience with the stuff we call literature.”⁵⁵

As another example of a shift in the English curriculum, during the late 1960s and early 1970s previously rescinded ideas of education would reinvent themselves in the form of a new curriculum movement named the elective curriculum. This program substituted a lockstep progression of high school English courses with electives similar to college offerings. For example, instead of taking Junior English, students could select Early American Literature, Mythology, or a class focused on analyzing popular novels. Diane Christenbury, former president of the NCTE, wrote extensively about this movement and argued it was reminiscent of earlier progressive and life adjustment education movements. Similar to those student-centered teaching philosophies, the elective curriculum provided students with an immediate relevant purpose in education depending on the course they chose. Furthermore, the curriculum did not separate students based on academic level; instead it left curricular options open to all students.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Titles of instructional articles included “If Only Dickens Had Written about Hot Rods” and “Phoney Literature.”

⁵⁵ Richard Corbin, “NCTE Presidential Address: Poetry and Hard Fact,” *English Journal* 55, no. 3 (1966): 271.

⁵⁶ See Leila Christenbury, “The Elective Curriculum: Origin, Development, and Decline,” *English Education* 15, no. 2 (1983): 73-91.

Christenbury has argued that the elective curriculum was a reaction against the subject-centered movements of the 1960s that “placed extraordinary demands upon non-college bound students” and teachers who were not able to advanced literary techniques as determined necessary by curriculum reformers.⁵⁷ Those non-college bound students, “a population which, despite the claims of the academics, was not without exception destined to major in English in college, become literary critics, or, at the lowest level, revel in English for the profundities of its intricate structure,” were particularly seen as requiring another strategy to enable them to reach their academic potential. This strategy would take its form as the Secondary English Elective Curriculum.⁵⁸

This curriculum represented freedom for students and teachers. Students were able to choose the course that fit their desires and interests and teachers valued the curriculum because it provided them with freedom over their course. An instructor who felt particularly suited to teach one area of English could focus on that dimension. All of this countered earlier educational reforms that encouraged rigid curriculum planning that enabled researchers to determine course objectives in spite of the input from teachers. The elective curriculum reversed this trend.

The elective curriculum was initiated and promoted in the University of Iowa lab school by G. Robert Carlsen.⁵⁹ According to Carlsen, the program was successful

⁵⁷ Christenbury, “The Origin, Development, and Decline of the Secondary English Elective Curriculum,” 71.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ It is no surprise that Carlsen encouraged this type of curriculum. I previously detailed how Carlsen wrote about English’s position in the life adjustment education movement and in turn, how he was critical of subject-centered reforms in the 1960s. A consistent theme of structuring English curricula around student interest extends throughout his work.

because students, who were typically resistant to English courses, enjoyed the course offerings and, more importantly, having the choice to enroll in their preferred classes. He wrote about this program in a 1962 issue of *The English Journal* and explained how the traditional structure of high school English failed the majority of students. Most were bored and uninterested with the subject by the time they reached their junior year. Carlsen's program divided junior and senior years into individual electives and found greater interest and excitement over the classes.⁶⁰

The elective curriculum had notable support during the 1960s, but its use waned during the 1970s. In reports of popular teaching techniques, many schools in the late 1960s and early 1970s were structuring their curricula around electives.⁶¹ It was even referred to as “probably...the most significant development in school English curricula in the twentieth century” and advantageous over previous methods “of the skilled technician who follows procedures specified by others to that of the professional who designs and evaluates the procedures.”⁶² This excitement in the elective curriculum, though significant, did not last. Many schools removed the elective options from English during the 1980s. This more conservative educational era, as signaled by scathing report of “A Nation at Risk,” regarded the elective curricula as leftover from an outdated time. As Christenbury claimed “as the decade of the 1960s became increasingly scorned for its

⁶⁰ G. Robert Carlsen and John Conner, “New Patterns from Old Molds,” *English Journal* 51, no. 4 (1962): 244-245.

⁶¹ See Arthur Applebee, *A Survey of Teaching Conditions in English, 1977* (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1978), 29.

⁶² George Hillocks, “In Defense of Electives,” *The English Journal* 65, no. 5 (1976): 7.

purported excesses and failures, the elective curriculum, closely identified with the philosophy of that era, was suddenly unfashionable and unwelcome.”⁶³

Conclusion

The 1960s started with an initial push for federal financial support for research in the teaching of English. The NCTE had received funding for Project English and attempted to design curriculum in the spirit of previous federally funded curriculum projects in math and science. Concurrent to wider academic reforms in math and science, Project English curriculum centers conducted research through discipline experts. English professors, not professors in education or teachers in the field, compiled and tested research before it was disseminated to classrooms. These centers produced a dearth of curricular materials set up under the construct of the tripod curriculum model of language, literature, and composition.

Concurrent to Project English centers were additional NCTE proposals for funding that followed similar methods from earlier attempts. NCTE members researched and published *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English* in 1964 as a companion to 1961’s *The National Interest and the Teaching of English*, the latter a data-filled report of the poor state of English punctured with national consequences for neglecting reform in the subject. Unlike the earlier publication, *The Continuing Education of Teachers* dealt specifically with the education of current English teachers. The publication’s argument claimed English teachers were under prepared for teaching the subject. Additionally, though there had been developments in researching English teaching techniques, teachers were financially unable to attend conferences or

⁶³ Leila M. Christenbury, “An Untimely Death: An Elegy for the Elective Curriculum,” *The English Journal* 83, no. 3 (1994): 20.

programs in order to acquire new curricular techniques. Their recommended solution was a federally supported widespread funding program to instruct teachers with updated curriculum materials.

NCTE officials also appealed to Congress in similar ways to their lobbying efforts in 1961. They repeated the argument from *The National Interest and the Continuing Education of Teachers of English* that teachers were unprepared to apply modern education research. The only way to achieve educational reform was for widespread federal funding for teaching institutes through a strategy akin to math and science reforms. This lobbying worked and became subsequently praised within the NCTE as a winning strategy that enabled the inclusion of English into the 1964 NDEA revisions.

The Dartmouth Conference stood an important conclusion to this period of the NCTE and the teaching of English. This conference signaled a shift from the subject-centered reforms of the early 1960s as advocated by the NCTE and student-centered curriculum ideas that occurred later in the decade. Highlighting differences between American and British educators, it caused American educators to reexamine their recent reforms. Generally, American participants approached the conference searching for ways of continuing their subject-centered reforms through acquiring British ideas, but they unexpectedly encountered British educators whose perspective was similar to the NCTE's earlier twentieth century ideas on teaching. The conference resulted in American participants upset, confused, and forced to reexamine their beliefs on their teaching.

Carlsen summed up this time period as "the reversal of the pendulum away from this elitist point of view," toward a student-centered perspective that "climaxes in the Dartmouth Conference, where much to the surprise of the Americas, the British were all

for child-centered, activity-centered programs. Even the most stubborn elitists seemed to change their points of view.”⁶⁴ The 1960s was a tumultuous period for education. Things changed including wider educational movements with civil rights reforms and a renewed focus on the disadvantaged child. This shift represented a return to student-centered education. An example of similar reforms in the teaching of English was the elective curriculum, popularized by G. Robert Carlsen who also wrote supporting life adjustment education and railed against Project English materials. Connected to those earlier movements, this curricular program encouraged freedom and democracy between teacher and students, because teachers designed courses that reflected their teaching interests and students chose their schedules from those classes. This was an example of the mood of English teaching shifting from a subject centered academic curriculum to one that represented the individual needs of learners: a tenet of earlier NCTE movements.

⁶⁴ G. Robert Carlsen, Interview by Alfred Grommon, 2.

CONCLUSION

Well I have gone through transitions in my career. For a time I was very much a free thinker about how English should be taught, what the subject should be, until I saw, about the time of Sputnik (1957), the need for more discipline. English classes seemed to be dissipating their energies in frills and trivia. This I thought was dangerous and I became a classicist. I think that was the academic response to Sputnik....¹

James Miller, longtime NCTE member and 1970 president expressed these feelings while taking part in a past-president interview project for the NCTE archives. In looking back over his career, he claimed his perspective changed following Sputnik. As I emphasized throughout this project, this was the general mood of NCTE officials during the late 1950s. They became caught up in the moment of post-Sputnik reforms in education and altered their advocacy, formed new bonds with previous organizations to which they had previously held opposing views, and fought to enable English to receive federal money toward the research and teaching of English. However, all of this was short lived. NCTE members protested these reforms as being too extreme from earlier periods, and the 1966 Anglo American Conference at Dartmouth exposed American participants to a new perspective on earlier NCTE positions over the teaching of English.

This project shows the extent that a professional education organization can alter its longtime message in an attempt to acquire institutional power through research funding and policy influence. In this section, I conclude my analysis by revisiting the initial theoretical background areas and connecting the ideas back to wider issues in

¹ James Miller, Interview by Julie Jensen, January 26, 1991, Box SG-02, National Council of Teachers of English Archives.

education. Both of these areas situate the NCTE's actions against broader issues in education and provide additional lenses to view the NCTE and federal education policy between 1958 and 1966.

Theoretical Connections Revisited

In the introduction I outlined three theoretical backgrounds that I considered during my initial research. The first, agenda setting theories within public policy research, analyzes how issues appear on the governmental agenda. The second, research steering, considers how research is steered so that its results fit a predetermined outcome. The third, organizational boundary definition, examines the benefits and negative outcomes when organizations redefine the boundaries of their discipline. In this section I revisit those ideas highlighting a reexamination of the issues with a consideration of arguments from this work.

Agenda Setting

As I mentioned in the introduction, agenda-setting research is a field within the public policy discipline that examines how issues appear on a government agenda. This idea as theorized by Kingdon claims that political entrepreneurs are able to affect public policy by capitalizing on an issue during a policy window, or opportunistic period that lends itself to change.² Roberts and King further delineated ten categories through which policy entrepreneurs act:

idea generation activities; problem framing activities; dissemination activities; strategic activities; demonstration project activities; activities cultivating bureaucratic insiders and advocates; collaborative activities with high-profile elite groups; activities enlisting support from elected officials; lobbying activities;

² Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 129-130.

activities attracting media attention and support; and administrative and evaluative activities.³

Kingdon argues that policy windows are “the opportunities for action on given initiatives.”⁴ These windows are typically brief but pivotal in opening availability for new directions of government action. Its appearance can be determined by a number of factors including a shift in political leadership on a Congressional committee or a perceived public need for specific policy action. Kingdon additionally argues that other public concerns, such as rising energy costs or environmental issues can also open policy windows—windows that could increase the likelihood that a solution attached to one of these identified problems could be included in accompanying legislation.

It is my argument that due to many issues in the educational, political, and societal landscape during the 1950s, the era was ripe for change. Specifically in terms of educational curricular change, notwithstanding earlier momentum acquired by progressive and life adjustment education critics, the Russian launch of Sputnik brought those concerns to the forefront of public opinion and allowed for a policy window for increased federal government education funding, epitomized by the NDEA. Specifically in reaction to Sputnik’s launch and the public perception of American students falling behind their Russian counterparts in technological endeavors, the likely curricular areas receiving financial bolstering were math and science. But, these subjects were not the only ones receiving aid. Foreign language and school counseling were also included in the NDEA bill. In terms of the former, its inclusion was necessitated on the impending

³ Roberts and King, “Policy Entrepreneurs,” 158-159.

⁴ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 174.

global competition tied to national defense. In terms of the latter, counseling was considered imperative in order to correctly identify and guide those academically talented students and encourage their success.⁵

The NCTE as Policy Entrepreneurs

Kingdon names those participants who encouraged specific policy proposals, policy entrepreneurs. These individuals or groups can be motivated by personal benefit, public policy ideology, or because they enjoy engaging in the political process. Because of the multifaceted nature and roles these entrepreneurs can play, Kingdon does not limit them to government officials. Instead he claims:

They could be in or out of government, in elected or appointed positions, in interest groups or research organizations. But their defining characteristic, much as in the case of a business entrepreneur, is their willingness to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money—in the hope of a future return. That return might come to them in the form of policies of which they approve, satisfaction from participation, or even personal aggrandizement in the form of job security or career promotion.⁶

As discussed earlier, Roberts and King, building on Kingdon's ideas, further delineate the entrepreneurial roles through categorizing motive and governmental involvement. Within this typology, they argued that policy entrepreneurs engage in ten categories of action. It is my argument that from 1958 through 1961, The NCTE, as policy entrepreneurs, engaged in their own political action that aligns with Roberts and King's typology. Through "problem framing" the inequalities in English education and the dire consequences for national defense and the future of education in the United States; "dissemination activities" that promulgated their concerns; and "lobbying

⁵ Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 267.

⁶ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 129.

activities” through appearing before Congress and working with key government officials, they were able to acquire federal funding for the teaching of English.

Problem-Framing Activities

Roberts and King, in their longitudinal study of policy entrepreneurs engaged in a state-level discussion on a school choice plan, claim that one policy entrepreneurial strategy is problem-framing activities. In their description, they argued that “in order to convince policymakers that [the entrepreneur’s activities] represented sound policy, [they] needed to establish a clear link between the identified educational problems and their proposed and preferred solutions.”⁷ In order to accomplish this, they claimed it was necessary for the groups to accomplish two goals. First, the policy entrepreneurs established a definition for “a performance gap in education” that translated to “a heightened sense of alarm regarding the current status of state and national education.”⁸ Second, they needed to provide a solution with which policymakers would agree.

The NCTE was able to define the problematic nature of status quo policies while also suggesting a solution. In doing so, they matched their rhetoric to similar ideas that were used to justify the NDEA. The main vehicle for defining the problem came through the rhetoric in *The National Interest and the Teaching of English*. As mentioned earlier, this publication aligned concerns over the dismal state of curriculum English classrooms with issues of national defense. Of particular relevance is the work’s second section, “The National Problem.” All of the section’s eleven emphasized points explain the relevance of English inadequacies in terms of national significance and not isolated to a

⁷ Roberts and King, “Policy Entrepreneurs,” 159.

⁸ Ibid., 160.

particular geographic area or population segment. Among other areas, the document cited: business leaders having expressed the need for stronger communication from their employees; international travelers as being able to use world literature to help bridge cultural gaps; and average Americans needing literature to provide them a rich and fulfilling life. All of these goals are set against the changing, complex technological society of the early 1960s and uses this backdrop from which to establish its pertinence and importance. As the conclusion of the section summed up, “the fate of our democracy now rests on the way we develop our manpower. And English can, in transmitting the humanistic tradition, help vitalize democracy, and, in developing the art and skill of communication, help assure its lasting strength.”⁹

The NCTE’s presentation of these issues aligned with late 1950s national education rhetoric. As stated previously, during Congressional testimony over the passage of the NDEA, military figures gave examples of the importance of education in issues of national defense. Wernher von Braun of the Army Ballistic Missile Agency contended that if the Soviet Union’s educational system surpassed American education it would be as if the United States was committing “national suicide.” Admiral Hyman Rickover, outspoken critic of the life adjustment education movement, argued that “education is more important than the Army, the Navy, or the Air Force, or even the Atomic Energy Commission.”¹⁰ In aligning their argument with successful rhetoric that led to the passage of the NDEA, the NCTE was not fighting for the strength of its discipline, or the ability of its teaching force, but instead they conceded the critical

⁹ The Committee on National Interest, *The National Interest and the Teaching of English*, 30.

¹⁰ Andrew Hartman, *Education and the Cold War*, 185.

attacks on their subject and joined in on the condemning the critical attacks of their discipline.

The second chapter of *The National Interest and the Teaching of English* offered a suitable solution to the problems raised. The authors claimed in their final point that “coordinated national and state efforts are needed to improve the teaching of English.”¹¹ More specifically, they suggested “workshops, institutes, surveys, and conferences.”¹² to “focus their attention on critical problems and make common cause in a major search for solution.”¹³ Next, they specifically linked the prospect of their success to the NDEA:

The success of recent national programs in the sciences and modern foreign languages demonstrates what can be accomplished by a nationally financed effort. It is possible for a national program to be instrumental in mobilizing local resources in a way that disparate, separate authorities could never do and to tap educational leadership in ways never before thought possible.¹⁴

In connecting these positions back to Roberts and King, the strategy from NCTE leaders is consistent with the Roberts and King two-fold entrepreneurial trait. Through defining a problem and then providing a viable solution, NCTE leaders and officials connected problematic issues within the teaching of English to a broader national dialogue on education. More specifically, they were able to position the criticism within similar rhetoric that led to the passing of the NDEA. Furthermore, they provided a solution that mirrored successful government-funded programs in science and foreign language.

¹¹ The Committee on National Interest, *The National Interest and the Teaching of English*, 28.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Dissemination Activities

Roberts and King argue that another quality of effective policy entrepreneurs is the ability to proliferate their ideas and concerns and “spread their ideas to as wide an audience as possible.” In order to accomplish this, “the policy entrepreneurs employed a range of dissemination mechanisms. They wrote reports, position papers, books, articles, and columns for newspapers and newsletters.”¹⁵

The NCTE also disseminated information through its own publications and media outlets. As mentioned earlier, the NCTE responded to concerns over being left out the NDEA through participating in the College Entrance Examination Board’s commission on English in 1959. The resulting publication, “The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English,” was one example of disseminating information, not only to the public and policymakers but also to English teachers and others associated with the profession.¹⁶ Along with this joint project with the MLA and other organizations, the NCTE also disseminated information on its own. In 1958, the NCTE started a program of awards of high school students who excelled in English. These awards, which were frequently mentioned in the students’ local newspapers, were an example of the NCTE seeking to improve their image in the public’s mind. Not only were they actively bestowing honor on high school students, but those that achieved the honor were those who excelled

¹⁵ Roberts and King, “Policy Entrepreneurs,” 160.

¹⁶ Along with the formal publication, this document was discussed in the media. See Fred M. Hechinger, “English Teaching Found Deficient,” *New York Times*, January 25, 1961, 35; Fred M. Hechinger, “Lag in English: Poor Preparation of Students is Laid to ‘Chaotic Conditions,’” *New York Times*, January 29, 1961, E9.

beyond their peers.¹⁷ Thus, the NCTE was again redefining success in English through aligning popular notions of academic rigor with public approval.

The National Interest and the Teaching of English was another example of the NCTE working independently to disseminate information. This publication was highly touted within the NCTE's journal, *The English Journal*, and also was made available to a wider audience of the general public. Also, it was distributed to the every member of Congress prior to NDEA reauthorization hearings in 1961 and during Congressional testimony, NCTE members would routinely ask that the complete document or a summary of the findings be placed within the Congressional record.¹⁸

Lobbying Activities

Roberts and King claim that lobbying was another strategy important for policy entrepreneurs in their study. They argue that different entrepreneurial groups were able to lobby government officials and the media through state congressional testimony and “a massive campaign of blanket newspaper editorial columns with favorable letters to influence legislators.”¹⁹ This area was largely discussed in the third chapter with details of NCTE leaders testifying before Congress during the 1961 NDEA reauthorization hearings and in the fourth chapter with NCTE leaders again testifying before Congress during the 1964 reauthorization hearings. During this time the NCTE proudly used its problem-framing techniques and dissemination activities in conjunction with testifying to

¹⁷ Applebee, *Tradition and Reform*, 199.

¹⁸ Harold Allen also argued that this strategy of disseminating information was successful in raising public and political interest in concerns over the teaching of English and motivated higher educational institutes to search for solutions that aligned with NCTE guidelines. See Harold Allen, “Counciletter,” 152.

¹⁹ Roberts and King, “Policy Entrepreneurs,” 166

convince leaders to fund English research. They were successful in convincing Commissioner of Education Sterling McMurrin of English's importance, and this lobbying led to the creation of Project English, the 1961 governmental program to initiate research into English curricular materials. Though NCTE leaders were unsuccessful in convincing Congress to include English into the 1961 NDEA reauthorization bill, they did continue their lobbying activities and English was included in the 1964 NDEA reauthorization.

Research Steering

A further research area that I initially connected with this project was research steering, or how research can be steered to adhere to a specific ideology or organizational goals in order to achieve financial support. Because of the shifting of research goals to achieve money, this type of research counters the idea of "pure research" or research conducted with no particular outcome known. Instead, the research is conducted with a specific goal of achieving the outcomes desired by the organization supplying money. Also, research steering literature argues for a "knowledge-based economy" which prioritizes knowledge and technology as driving human capital. In particular, the knowledge valued is literacy and numerical manipulation.²⁰

As I elaborated in the introduction, the actions of the NCTE during 1958-1966 aligned with this notion of research steering on three levels. First, the NCTE adapted its ideas to fit the rhetoric of the federal government, which dispensed money to programs supporting its ideology. As I chronicled throughout this project, the NCTE shifted its

²⁰ Ozga, Seddon, and Popkewitz, *Education Research and Policy*; Kenway, Bullen, and Robb, "The Knowledge Economy"; Ozga, "Knowledge and Policy."

publicly avowed curriculum goals to match late 1950s Cold War rhetoric that supported increased academic rigor and subject-centered education. Second, during the 1950s, Americans had a similar notion of knowledge driving human capital. During this period the best and brightest in schools were targeted for their help in asserting American ideals.²¹ Third, NCTE rhetoric reflected this problem-solving notion. The NCTE did not conduct new research and wait to see if the outcomes matched up with the federal perspective. The NCTE presented its research and aligned it to the necessary ideology in an attempt to acquire funds.

The shift was representative in the NCTE's adherence to the MLA perspective on English education. In chapter three I detailed the initial approach of the NCTE to working with the MLA before the Basic Issues Conference of 1958. There had been a contentious past between the two organizations and this conference did not necessarily equate the groups as partners, but instead there was still a gulf between the two in how English should be taught. What they did agree on was a general definition of English as language, literature, and composition. This definition was a shift from NCTE advocacy earlier in the decade when its curriculum series categorized English as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, with additional areas within those categories.²²

This new definition, which was originally established for college courses, signified a shift for the NCTE aligning itself with higher education interests, and would be used by the NCTE to conduct research in Project English, the curriculum research

²¹ See David L. Angus and Jeffrey E. Mirel, *The Failed Promise of the American High School: 1890-1995* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 102-121.

²² The Commission on the English Curriculum, *Language Arts for Today's Children*, xi.

program that was operated by NCTE members at higher education institutes and conducted by professors of English. This was the same rhetoric that had been successful in the MLA achieving federal funding for language training institutes within the NDEA's original passage in 1958. In essence, the NCTE adapted its research to a rhetoric that had previously acquired federal funding in hopes of landing financial support of its own. This strategy was ultimately successful. Armed with data from Project English and arguments that only large-scale funding could correct deficiencies in the teaching of English, the NCTE successfully lobbied the federal government to include English in 1964 NDEA revisions.

Organizational Boundary Definition

The third broader research topic that I envisioned with this project was negative impacts from organization redefining the boundaries of their field. As I mentioned in the introduction, Mona Gleason argues that psychologists in Canada during the early and mid-twentieth century helped legitimize and bolster their professional usefulness through promulgating notions of correctness and attributing value to normalcy. Those persons that strayed from this idea could benefit from the services provided by psychologists. Thus, through defining boundaries and disseminating rhetoric that reinforced those boundaries, the profession benefited.²³

During the 1950s, the NCTE envisioned itself as representing the entire profession of English teachers. This organization was not just supporting the ideas and issues within its membership, but instead sought institutional power through broadening its membership and increasing its impact on policy. The NCTE accomplished both during

²³ See Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal*.

the 1950s: its membership grew substantially along with its influence on national policy issues related to the teaching of English.

Similar to my previous argument concerning research steering, the key moment in the NCTE's attempt to increase power through redefining its organizational boundary came with the adoption of the tripod definition of English as language, literature, and composition. This initial adoption during the Basic Issues Conference would sustain in additional NCTE documents during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Due to this definition, the NCTE was able to frame its research as specific to only those areas, as evident in Project English. Furthermore, by using this definition, the NCTE separated itself from criticism that English education was a hodgepodge of unfocused topics ranging from college preparatory topics such as reading Shakespeare to life-adjustment oriented topics that considered using the telephone or writing notes appropriate lessons for English courses.

This redefinition of English sparked a wave of internal criticism. As I document in chapter three, Robert Carlsen called it "the unholy trinity" while other NCTE members openly opposed it because they feared it needlessly separated English into a collection of functional skills. One member on the 1963 NCTE Commission on the English Curriculum claimed the definition obscured the "objectives in the value area" of English including aesthetical appreciation of literature and relegated English courses to just teaching students to read in order for them to be functionally literate. Neil Postman

claimed it was “unnatural, irrelevant, and unworkable” because of these skills overlap each other in practice instead of remaining separate.²⁴

Wider Historical Issues in Education

The introduction outlined two areas of education that I connected with this project. First, notions of student-centered education, or education designed to connect with student interest and ability foremost with intricacies of the discipline’s content following. Second, I detailed the notion of experience as it connected with other educational goals outside of the teaching of English. Both of these areas were peripheral to the major topic of this dissertation, however they are necessary in situating the events of the NCTE within a wider historical focus on education.

Student-Centered Education

Student-centered education was one rallying cry of the early NCTE that sought to restructure English around the interests and abilities of students. During the early twentieth century the progressive education movement advocated the restructure of schools for efficiency and a focus on student needs. Aligned with similar notions, the NCTE members produced two documents that reinforced these sentiments. The first, known as “The Hosis Report,” was published in 1917 and part of the Cardinal Principles report. It identified problems with a widespread college preparatory curriculum used for all students without regard to their future life goals. To reach students not attending post-

²⁴ G. Robert Carlsen, Interview by Alfred Grommon, 7; Commission on the English Curriculum Notes, October 1, 1963, Record Series 15/73/3, Box 2, University of Illinois Archives; Postman, “Linguistics and the Pursuit of Relevance,” 1165.

secondary institutions, the report recommended broad social goals.²⁵ Another document that reflected this concept of student-centered education was the 1935 NCTE publication *An Experience Curriculum in English*. Again, the focus was on structuring a curriculum that first examined the needs of students then, through structuring relevant experiences, prepare them for life.²⁶

This student-centered focus continued through the 1950s as NCTE curriculum guides reflected progressive education and the life adjustment education movement. As I documented in chapter two, NCTE members connected English with this movement. Carlsen wrote in 1950's *Education for Life Adjustment: Its Meaning and Implementation* that English courses were not meeting the needs of students and to combat this, teachers should select literature to reflect the needs and interests of students. In the 1956 NCTE published curriculum guide, *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School*, the NCTE curriculum committee acknowledged "...the preparation of all students, whether bound for college or not, for the demands of the world outside the school."²⁷

As I argued in chapter three and four, this notion shifted during the 1950s but would return in the late 1960s. With its quest to build consensus among other English group and its adherence to building the power of its institution, the NCTE shifted its

²⁵ As I argued in chapter one, Hosic contended that the college preparatory curriculum was letting down the majority of students including those planning on attending higher education institutions. As Hosic argued, "The best preparation for anything is real effort and experience in the present." See "Reorganization of Secondary Schools," 20.

²⁶ Hatfield, the chairman of the commission claimed "by meeting situations, modifying conditions and adapting themselves to the unchangeable, our boys and girls will learn to live in a dynamic and evolving world. Today, more than ever, the curriculum should consist of experiences." See *An Experience Curriculum in English*, 1935, 3.

²⁷ Carlsen, "Education for Life Adjustment Through English"; *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School*, 442.

goals to support an academically rigorous curriculum. This shifted back though in the 1960s. Two developments signaled this transition. First, the Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth in 1966 presented American English educators with a British perspective that aligned with earlier student-centered philosophies that resembled earlier NCTE positions. Second, the Secondary English Elective Curriculum, a high school program that recommended organizing English courses around teacher and student interest. Additionally, NCTE publications show a concern for the experiences of economically and ethnically diverse students and connecting to them through literature.

In essence, student-centered education was the distinct trait of NCTE advocacy through much of the twentieth century. The exception was the time period between 1958 and 1966 in the years between the National Defense Education Act and the Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth. This was the anomaly when NCTE rhetoric focused on establishing a broad, rigorous curriculum that all students should attain.

Experience in Education

As I detailed in the introduction, as progressive education was attacked during the late 1950s, the federal government funded education programs modeled after scientific methods used during WWII. This systems method of curricular planning valued the input from subject experts in creating experiential learning activities. Rudolph documented the history of this process from its use in wartime situations to American education. He contends that the origin of systems method with the British military during WWII. Known as operations research, this wartime strategy valued the role of civilian statisticians in developing military planning. Following WWII, this method of problem

solving spread to non-military situations including sociological, transportation, and most importantly for this project, education issues.²⁸

Many issues coalesced into this method being used in American education. First, there were rampant public and academic attacks on progressive education. As I documented in the second chapter, progressive education, and more specifically, life adjustment education, was seen as relaxed and superficial. Additionally, the 1955 book *Soviet Professional Manpower*, by Nicholas DeWitt, spurred Congress into providing additional money towards science education programs through the National Science Foundation (NSF). Furthermore, in 1950s America, science was seen as a panacea for social problems.²⁹

The NSF sponsored summer research programs to apply the systems method to education. This approach was similar to earlier versions used in military strategy: instead of one problem examined, a full range of issues were considered before attempting to solve an issues; experts input was vital, which meant subject experts planned curriculum, not professors of education; and the learning output was continually reevaluated. Additionally, as J.J. McPherson, a member of the educational media branch in the U.S. Office of Education wrote in 1960, "...materials used [should] represent an application of the best knowledge about means of giving an individual the kinds of experiences most likely to result in desired learning."³⁰

²⁸ Rudolph, *Scientists in the Classroom*.

²⁹ Ibid., 74-77; 35-38.

³⁰ McPherson, "Let's Look at the Systems Concept of Educational Planning," 66.

This last point is important. The systems method in education valued experiential learning. This was the same point that proved elusive for the NCTE. In the late 1950s, NCTE leaders hinged their rhetoric on many aspects of the systems education concept. They appealed to Congress using language that seemed successful in funding math and science programs including connecting problems in English to Cold War concerns of national interest. Concurrently, the NCTE was aligning its curriculum with English experts. This period saw the NCTE adoption of the tripod definition of English, which originated on the college level. Increased relations with the MLA, an organization associated with College English interests, additionally reflect this shift. Finally, the Project English curriculum was written on college campuses and used the tripod curriculum.

What the NCTE neglected though, was the importance of student experience. Other subjects that utilized the systems method planned educational methods that incorporated experiential learning. As Carlsen noticed while attending math and science curriculum meetings, those areas “seemed to be moving in a diametrically opposite direction from English” because they used creative methods to help students experience new forms of engaged learning. The NCTE, on the other hand, sought to escape its connection to this type of education. To them, this was too similar to progressive-era methods and exactly the type of curriculum that the public seemed to be against. Instead, they took a hard line approach to education and stressed a definite boundary of English

and advocated teaching students within that framework. Not letting, as Carlsen saw with math and science, students creatively engaging in making their own boundaries.³¹

I argue that in this process, the NCTE lost part of its historical roots but ultimately regained them. Its early commitments to experiential learning through their cornerstone 1935 publication of *An Experience Curriculum in English* were abandoned along with student-centered tenets of earlier decades. This shift was radical enough to cause a backlash in the NCTE and caused members to grasp onto British ideas presented during the 1966 Anglo American Conference at Dartmouth that were more similar to earlier NCTE positions on experience and education. It also set the stage for the development of the secondary English elective curriculum popularized in American high schools throughout the 1970s. This structure granted more autonomy to teachers and students with the former having freedom in selecting their courses and the latter open to create the courses they wished to teach. Both of these, along with a wider social movement to reach an increasingly ethnically and economically diverse school population enabled the NCTE to return back to a focus on connecting literature to students through creating relevant learning experiences.

³¹ G. Robert Carlsen, "The State of the Profession, 1962," Record Series 99.0040, University of Iowa Archives.

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VITA

Curtis Mason was born in Kansas City, Missouri and attended North Kansas City High School. In 2001 he received a Bachelor of Arts in English from Truman State University. Following that, he attended University of Missouri-Kansas City where he received his Master of Arts in Education in 2004. While working on his Master's degree, he also taught high school English and debate at Excelsior Springs High School in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. In 2006, he moved to Chicago to attend Loyola University. After completing his coursework and comprehensive examinations, Curtis moved back to Kansas City where he taught at Imagine Renaissance Academy and Raytown Success Academy. Outside of teaching in K-12 schools, Curtis has also taught undergraduate and graduate level education courses at Loyola University Chicago; Benedictine College; and the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Curtis has presented research at the Association of British Studies Conference and the History of Education Annual Meeting.