The problem. The purpose of the report was to determine the extent and nature of English electives programs being offered or planned in selected Iowa high schools.

Procedure. Fifty schools were selected through the use of the Iowa School District Directory, and were of three general enrollment sizes. Responses were received from forty-two of those originally selected. The returned surveys included brief descriptions of the elective courses, intended student clientele, and enrollment patterns or trends. The surveys were then tabulated and combined to form an overall list of courses (i.e., similar courses under varying titles were combined). Related literature dealing with high school English electives was consulted for similar reports and criticisms.

Findings. The survey responses shared an extensive use of electives programs in all sizes of schools, in all areas of the state. Only three of the forty-two responding schools did not have electives programs. The combined list of courses fell into seven study areas: literature, composition, usage, journalism, speech and dramatics, communications, and humanities. Courses for advanced or mixed groupings tended to predominate over basic or remedial courses. The report was concluded with a list of ten recommendations for electives program development.
ENGLISH ELECTIVES IN IOWA HIGH SCHOOLS:
A SURVEY

A Field Report
Presented to
The School of Graduate Studies
Drake University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science in Education

by
Harold A. Swihart, Jr.
August 1973
ENGLISH ELECTIVES IN IOWA HIGH SCHOOLS:

A SURVEY

by

Harold A. Swihart, Jr.

Approved by Committee:

[Signatures]

Chairman

[Signature]

[Signature]

Dean of the School of Graduate Studies
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Chapter I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM AREA

During the past decade, the general trend of the curriculum in high schools has been away from traditional programs of general courses in math, English, science, and social studies to a more individualized program of elective courses in these areas. This trend can be attributed, in part, to the following factors:

1. A declining percentage in recent years of college bound high school graduates. The economic situation, war, and the rise of area colleges and technical training institutions have lessened the importance of a four year degree to many high school graduates. For example, the percentage of college bound graduates at Lincoln High School in Des Moines has declined from 46 percent in 1967 to 22 percent in 1972.\(^1\) The non college bound student has become an overwhelming majority in that school, and likely in many others. Because of this, prevailing needs and attitudes differ from the traditional ones for American and English Literature and composition.

2. Changing graduation requirements as established by local school boards (through the State Department of

\(^1\)Department of Pupil Services, Guidance and Counseling, Des Moines Public Schools, Des Moines, Iowa.
Public Instruction). Currently the state of Iowa requires only two years of English credit for graduation from high school. Many districts, as will be shown in the results of the study to be reported here, still require three or four years of English, but some have lowered the requirements to two years. This has encouraged the development of elective courses in order to increase student interest in English and to maintain staff levels in the departments.

3. The recent emphasis on career education and individually guided education in the schools. New programs of career investigation and orientation in both elementary and secondary schools have stressed attention to the individual student's needs and differences; the creation of elective courses in specific areas of study helps to approach and develop these needs and skills in a more homogenous situation. The individually guided education method, now being expanded mostly in elementary and junior high schools, is more adaptable to the high schools' elective programs than to the traditional required course curriculum.

1General Records of the Iowa Department of Public Instruction, Des Moines, Iowa.

2Based on association with Mr. John Jarvis, Guidance Department, Lincoln High School, Des Moines, Iowa.

3Ibid.
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The three basic purposes of the present study were:

1. To determine, through a survey of selected Iowa high schools, the types of elective English courses currently offered, those discontinued, and those planned for future addition to the curriculum.

2. To determine from the survey the extent of ability grouping among the courses surveyed: which courses and groups of courses are intended for high, average, low, or mixed levels.

3. To determine the trend of enrollment in various courses and groups of courses, and to generalize from those figures which courses will most likely continue, and which are likely to be terminated. A section of the survey will also include a list of those courses already discontinued and the reasons for their termination.

FRAMEWORK OF THE INVESTIGATION

The assumptions to be considered in this survey relate, to some degree, to the purpose stated earlier. First, it will be assumed that this survey represents a valid cross section of randomly selected high schools in the state of Iowa. In Chapter III, Design of the Investigation, the method by which the schools were selected will be explained.
Second, it will be assumed that the survey's over-riding purpose is to present an objective description of the elective English courses in the schools, not to offer itself as a guidebook for recommending courses to the prospective curriculum developer.

Third, it is hoped that the development of programs described in the Review of Related Literature will show how curriculum developers, though they may refer to other schools for suggestions of course offerings, design the bulk of their programs in conjunction with the desires, needs, and concerns of their students and community. Consequently, the large urban high school is not likely to offer a course in agricultural journalism, and the small rural high school will probably not offer a course in Black literature.

Fourth, the terms used in ability grouping of the courses (i.e., low, average, high, mixed) are general definitions and are not related to any specific measurement of achievement, ability, or standardized test scores. The survey sent to the schools requested only that the courses be designated for one of three ability areas - low, average, or high; or, if no grouping were indicated, the term "mixed" would be applied to describe the student clientele.

Fifth, it will be assumed that the term "course" should apply to a full time elected class which meets each day of the week for a full term and which gives an English
credit toward graduation from high school upon successful completion. Therefore, the term excludes required English classes prerequisite to an electives program (such as ninth or tenth grade English), or any partial term or "mini" courses which have become increasingly popular in recent years.
Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, studies and reports related to the English electives curriculum, and selected from available professional literature, will be reviewed.

BACKGROUND OPINIONS ON ELECTIVES IN ENGLISH

The subject of electives programs in English brings about a generally favorable and optimistic commentary from experts in the fields of language arts teaching and curriculum development, but not without some reservations concerning purpose and direction.

Walen sees the mission of the English teacher as having changed somewhat from that of twenty or thirty years ago. The students then were more academically oriented and felt a stronger need for college as a requirement for success.1 Walen also cites the coming of the junior college and the decrease in the overall dropout rate as helping to change the situation faced by the teacher. More students in more diverse areas of interest and reading abilities have brought about a

---
need for the development of the individual and flexibility in the English program in the school.¹

Fitzgerald's point of view is perhaps the least optimistic. After visiting eighteen schools along the Eastern seaboard, he came to the general conclusion that although the electives programs is in the forefront of trends in both public and private schools, it contains little change or relevance.² Fitzgerald bases this observation on two misconceptions held by the schools:

1. The notion of curriculum as implicit in the elective programs;
2. The distinction between the process of learning and the process of education.³

Fitzgerald criticizes the electives idea because of its lack of organization; the students in the program are taught certain things at certain times; and its random nature allows important material to be skipped by students who might need it.⁴ Some schools which were visited required a rigid English course for college bound students, while it was for those students that the electives program was originally designed.⁵ Fitzgerald sees in general a need for English

¹Ibid., p. 1073.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
classes to be flexible within themselves, with the teacher acting as "co-inquirer" and not as a disseminator of a fixed content.\(^1\)

A more cautiously optimistic outlook on English electives has been that of Rounds, who agrees with the idea behind replacing requirements with electives, but places importance in their design and development. The student, according to Rounds, should play an important part in suggesting course content, as this will bring about shared responsibilities for both successes and failures in the program.\(^2\)

Jaekle states that the success of learning is tied to the importance of the subject matter to the student (i.e., if he is interested, he will learn faster), that these interests are in a state of change, and that the curriculum should be spontaneous enough to change with them.\(^3\)

**SIMILAR PROGRAMS OF ELECTIVES**

In Manhattan, Kansas, McCormic and Karylsp developed a program of English electives centered around their largely


non-college bound student body.\(^1\) A pilot program was begun for seniors in low level classes with the following assumptions:

1. The students and instructors established twenty "units" of work together;
2. The students would receive points for completing units of work;
3. The number of points they accumulated would determine their grades;
4. As the work was not done in a traditional class situation, there would be virtually no competition between students;
5. The students would be allowed to work at their own speed.\(^2\)

The major objective in this program was reaching those students alienated from English, by offering them greater freedom of choice and responsibility for setting and achieving their own goals. A problem in labeling the course came about because of a desire to avoid having the students associate it with "basic" or special classes for low ability groups. The term "Non College English 12" was then applied to the course, with generally favorable reactions.\(^3\) After nine weeks, the students were asked to evaluate the program. In a survey, 90.3 percent were favorable, while 9.7 percent were unfavorable. Academically, four times as many seniors

---


\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid.
improved their English grades under the new electives program.\(^1\)

In Granby County, Connecticut, a high school with an enrollment of 600, a three year (grades 10-12) program of non-graded electives in English and social studies was coordinated between departments and grouped under these themes:

1. *First year*: English, world literature, corresponding with social science

2. *Second year*: American literature corresponding with American history

3. *Third year*: elective program in each area.\(^2\)

Some of the problems faced by the Granby County school included heavy teacher loads because of the small faculty, justification with the board of education and the community, complexities in scheduling (it was feared that electives would limit flexibility for allowing the students to select their primary subjects), and financing the program on a limited budget.\(^3\)

The program, according to Morton and Dolori, provided an incentive because of the age differences among the students in the non-graded classes and the operation of a "phase" system where the students selected their own ability levels. It was based on the school's overriding philosophy that each student is responsible for his own education.\(^4\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 280.


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 954.

\(^4\)Ibid.
The faculty at the Granby County school decided on semester length courses and developed the following electives:

1. English Literature
2. Speech
3. Creating Writing
4. Concepts of Comedy and Tragedy
5. Drama
6. Mass Media
7. Remedial Reading (individualized)1

The outcome of the program was an enthusiastic response from both faculty and community, as well as students.2

The program undertaken at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School in Sudbury, Massachusetts evolved over a four-year period. In a school of 1,700 students, Lincoln-Sudbury's program changes involved math, science, and social studies as well as English.3 The shift to electives involved four stages:

1. Shifting the teacher load from five classes a day, five days a week, to four classes a day, four days a week plus conference periods;

2. Developing a program of independent study in which the student could study 12th grade materials in the summer, pass an exam in September of his senior year, and proceed to an individualized project (with a teacher);

3. Establishing an honors program from designated areas, involving individual credit on a contract basis with the teacher;

1Ibid., p. 955. 2Ibid., p. 956.

4. Introducing the set of elective courses.¹

The electives were planned from joint suggestions by students and teachers. Each was a semester in length and each teacher’s load consisted of three regular classes and one elective. The courses were grouped in six areas: Basic Reading and Writing, Special Writing, Film, Drama, Speech Interests, and Literature. In evaluating the program, the teachers found their work more demanding, that financing was a problem, but also that the middle or average ability student was being reached more effectively through electives.²

The Iowa Council of Teachers of English has recently published lists of the most frequently taught traditional courses and new courses in English.³ The courses were listed with the number and percentages of Iowa’s 452 districts which included them in their curriculum. Of the traditional courses, which included English grades ten through twelve, American and British Literature, Dramatics, Speech, and Journalism, only Journalism showed an increase (+3 percent), while the others had decreased as much as 19 percent since 1971. The new courses, however, showed an increase throughout, ranging from Humanities (+1 percent) to Individualized Reading (+9 percent).

Other new courses included Creative Writing, Practical English, World Literature, Contemporary Literature, Composition, and Mass Media.¹

THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM OF DES MOINES
LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

In the fall of 1968, the decision was made to redesign the English program at Lincoln High School in Des Moines, and to develop, over a three year period, a set of elective courses. The reasons for this change included a lack of student interest in traditional English courses (this was also felt by the teachers), coming changes in graduation requirements, and a feeling that the traditional courses did not meet the needs of the widely diverse student body at Lincoln High School (enrollment: 2,200).² The existing program consisted of the following courses:

1. English 10
2. English 11 (American Literature)
3. English 12 (English Literature)
4. Drama
5. Journalism

¹Ibid.

²Based on personal association with Mrs. Lillian Wildereth, Chairman of the English Department, Abraham Lincoln High School, Des Moines, Iowa.
The department decided to involve only seniors for the first year (1969-70), and then expand to eleventh grade over the next two years. Teachers were then asked to prepare lists of possible courses which they would be interested in developing, and a survey was conducted among the students and parents for further suggestions. Each course to be developed was processed through administrative channels (i.e., the departments of secondary education, and language arts). The teachers volunteered to work on courses of their own choosing during the 1970-71 year. In most cases, they were allowed to teach the courses in the fall. It was felt that the most important part of the pre-trial period was getting student awareness of the electives program. With this in mind, the department conducted assemblies for the students in order to describe the courses to them, held meetings with parents to discuss the program, and had conferences with individual students to pre-register for the courses. The pre-registrations helped to determine approximate enrollment figures and teacher loads for the following year.¹

Since the fall of 1971, some minor adjustments have been made, but the electives program has been largely successful. The following list of courses includes those discontinued for lack of enrollment:

¹Ibid.
1. American Literature
2. Short Story
3. The Novel
4. Modern Literature
5. Individualized Reading
6. Literary Heritage
7. Expository Writing
8. Creative Writing
9. Writing Survey
10. Journalism
11. Speech Survey
12. Drama
13. Forensics
14. Everyday Communications
15. Reading Improvement

Discontinued
16. English Literature
17. Continental Literature
18. A. S. P.
19. Technical Writing
20. Looking at Language
21. Independent Study

\(^1\text{Ibid.}\)
Tenth grade students are largely excluded from the electives program, taking the required sophomore English course. However, some who demonstrate exceptional skill are allowed to enter electives for the second semester of their tenth grade year. There are no requirements in English in Des Moines after tenth grade, but the vast majority of the upper classmen at Lincoln are enrolling in English courses due to the development of the electives program.¹

¹ Based on an interview with John Jarvis, Guidance Department, Lincoln High School, Des Moines, Iowa, April 6, 1973.
Chapter III

DESIGN OF THE INVESTIGATION

The following chapter describes how the schools were selected, the basic contents of Parts One and Two of the survey, and the methods by which the results of each part of the survey will be listed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY

The schools were selected through the use of the Iowa School District Directory.\(^1\) The enrollments of the total districts, along with the number of high schools in the districts, were used in an attempt to gather a fairly equal representation of three sizes of high schools: under 500, between 500 and 1,000, and over 1,000 enrollment. Approximately one third of the fifty schools selected to receive survey forms represented each of the three sizes (see Appendices A, B, and C).

Part One of the survey requested basic information from the schools regarding their approximate enrollment, grade levels included, the number of years of English credit required, and the presence of an electives program in English.

\(^1\)Iowa School District Directory (Des Moines: Iowa State Department of Public Instruction).
Those schools not having an electives program ended the survey at that point.

Part Two of the survey consisted of a table sheet with spaces for course titles, semesters available, ability grouping (if any), average enrollment, and trend of enrollment. Separate sections of the table were included for discontinued courses and new courses planned. A stamped, addressed envelope was enclosed to facilitate the return of the survey.

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

The overall purpose of the survey was to obtain from the schools the information concerning their present programs of English courses and to determine the types of courses offered, their student clientele, and the enrollment patterns of the courses since their beginning.

METHOD OF TABULATION OF THE SURVEYS

Part One of the survey (the first page of four questions) has been tabulated as to the percentages of each answer choice related to the total number of schools sending returns, as well as the actual numbers of each response marked. This preliminary information will be described in the beginning of Chapter IV with the use of simple graphs and an explanation. This information will describe, to some extent, the types of
schools from which the information was drawn, and the random nature in which they were selected.

Part Two of the survey consists of the actual list of elective English courses currently offered by each school, plus separate lists of those courses discontinued and those courses planned for future offering. In this report, the course titles which refer to identical content will be combined under a single title with a brief description of content, ability grouping (if any), and enrollment trend. A reference will also be made in course description to the types of schools (based on enrollment) which have offered the course. The names and locations of the schools contributing to this survey will be shown in Appendix D.
Chapter IV

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

PART ONE

From a total of fifty survey forms mailed, 42 or 84 percent, were filled out and returned for tabulation.

The first question asked for the approximate enrollment size of the schools, using three categories as answer choices: less than 500, between 500 and 1,000, or over 1,000. The schools with enrollments in each of these categories will be referred to as Class A, B, or C in the Course Description section of this chapter (C indicating the largest schools).

Distribution of the Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class A (less than 500)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B (500-1,000)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class C (over 1,000)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number two determined the grades included as part of the high school enrollment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades Included</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. 8-12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 9-12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. 10-12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20
Question three determined which grade level in each school was the last to require an English credit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Grade Requiring English</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. 9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. 11</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. 12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question four asked whether or not the school offered an electives program in English. The following data show the percentages from the survey as a whole, followed by a breakdown into each of the three enrollment classes:

**General Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of schools having electives:</th>
<th>38</th>
<th>92</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of schools without electives:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Enrollment Class Breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Class A (less than 500)</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With Electives</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without Electives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Class B (500 to 1,000)</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With Electives</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without Electives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. Class C (over 1,000)</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With Electives</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without Electives</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number and Percentages of Courses in Each Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Literature</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Composition</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Usage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Speech and Drama</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Journalism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Communications</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Humanities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number and Percentages of Courses in Each Ability Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Type</th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed*</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No ability grouping intended.

PART TWO: COURSE DESCRIPTION

Current Courses

The following courses are taken from the surveys returned and, in many instances, are a composite title in
order to avoid repetition of like courses with varying
original titles. Each course resume includes title, enroll-
ment classes, brief content description, ability grouping
placement, and enrollment trend. The courses are grouped
under the following categories: Literature, Composition,
Usage, Speech and Drama, Journalism, Communications, and
Humanities.

Literature

1. Advanced World Literature (B, C). Historic trends in
literature from Europe, Asia, and America. Advanced
grouping; stable enrollment.

authors from colonial period to present. Mixed group-
ing; stable enrollment.

3. Best Sellers (B, C). Reading and discussion of current
and past best selling American English novels. Mixed
to advanced grouping; increasing enrollment.

4. Bible as Literature (C). Reading and discussion of the
Bible as a literary form; comparison with works of
mythology. Advanced grouping; steady enrollment.

5. Black Literature (C). Historical survey of literature
by Black Americans. Mixed grouping; increasing enroll-
ment.

(1950+ authors in all genre. Mixed grouping; steady
enrollment.

7. Critics of Society (B, C). Reading and discussion of
historians and philosophers; major theories. Advanced
grouping; steady enrollment.

8. Current Reading (B, C). Use of current media for read-
ing and discussion of themes and ideas. Mixed to low
grouping; steady enrollment.

10. English Literature (A, B, C). A survey of British authors and literary forms from 1066 to the twentieth century. Mixed to advanced grouping; declining enrollment (dropped at some schools).


12. Ideas in Literature (C). A study of the thoughts, ideals, and philosophies of man as reflected by fictional works. Advanced grouping; declining enrollment.

13. Individualized Reading (A, B, C). An independent reading period of (in most cases) free choices of novels read by the student in class with graded conferences evaluated by the instructor. Low to mixed grouping: sharply increasing enrollment.

14. Major American Authors (B, C). Similar to American Literature, but concentrating on selected authors instead of historical trends. Mixed grouping; steady enrollment.

15. Men and War (C). A study of fiction based on themes of war and its effect on man, both British and American. Mixed to advanced grouping; increasing enrollment.

16. Minority Literature (B, C). The literary works of minority group authors including Black, Mexican-American, Indian, etc.. Mixed grouping; increasing enrollment.

17. Mythology (B, C). Reading and discussion of early Greek and Roman literature and its role as predecessor to modern fiction and thought. Advanced grouping; declining enrollment.


20. Science Fiction and Horror (C). Reading and discussion of theme, technique, and beginnings of science fiction, Gothic novel, and other forms from Jules Vern to the present. Mixed to advanced grouping; increasing enrollment.


22. The Supernatural and Science Fiction (B, C). Similar to Science Fiction and Horror, but concentrating more on contemporary themes and authors. Advanced grouping; increasing enrollment.

23. Western Literature (B, C). Themes and examples of literature from the western hemisphere showing the development in Western Europe and America historically. Mixed to advanced grouping; steady enrollment.

24. World Literature (A, B, C). Similar to Western Literature, but used as a comparison of ideas and themes between regional cultures of the world. Mixed grouping; declining enrollment.

Composition

1. Composition Survey (A, B, C). A general course investigating all methods and types of narrative, descriptive and expository composition; a prerequisite to advanced or specific courses in most schools. Average to advanced grouping; increasing enrollment.

2. Advanced Composition (A, B, C). Practice of concepts and methods in expository and narrative writing; usual prerequisite: a survey or basic composition course. Average to advanced grouping; steady enrollment.

3. Business English (C). Usage and form in business communications and office work; methods of research and technical report writing; often tied to actual business related experiences. Average to advanced grouping; steady or declining enrollment.

5. Creative Writing (A, B, C). Techniques of descriptive, narrative, and dialogue writing; work with poetic forms, short story plot, and characterization. Stresses individual style and form. Advanced grouping; steady to increasing enrollment.

6. Expository Writing (A, B, C). Factual and objective reporting methods; research and investigative procedures; limited usage review. Average to advanced grouping; steady enrollment.

7. Personalized Writing (C). Development of informal, individual style in writing reviews, essays, and criticisms. Stresses creativity; similar to creative writing course. Mixed ability grouping; increasing enrollment.


9. Writing Laboratory (C). An individualized non-structured course involving aiding the student in specific writing skill areas; usually referred by instructors in other writing classes. Can be taken for partial or whole credit. Mixed grouping; steady enrollment.

Usage


2. Composition and Grammar Review (A, B). Similar to Basic English, but concentrating more on grammar and syntax. Usually includes a study of transformational grammar or structural linguistics. Mixed grouping; steady or declining enrollment.

3. English Language (B, C). A study of the history of the language including etymology, dialect development, and phonology. Similar courses include comparative studies of other languages and their development. Mixed to advanced grouping; steady enrollment.

4. Advanced Student Placement (A, S, P.) (C). A special course for college bound seniors who are recommended by teachers; credit for college freshman English given upon successful completion. Highly advanced grouping; declining enrollment and even dropped in some schools.
Speech and Dramatics

1. Speech (A, B, C). A general introductory course in speech technique and delivery, with work in informative, persuasive, and entertainment speeches. Usually is a prerequisite to other speech courses. Mixed grouping; steady or increasing enrollment.

2. Forensics (B, C). An advanced speech course involving procedures of debate, oral interpretation, parliamentary procedure, and group discussion. Course often involves extracurricular activities and competition between schools. Mixed to advanced grouping; steady or declining enrollment.

3. Oral Interpretation (C). An advanced speech course concentrating in voice projection, modulation, and expression in the reading and interpretation of poetry and literature. Advanced grouping; limited and declining enrollment.

4. Acting (A, B, C). A basic course (also called Drama I) in methods and types of acting, theaters, and makeup work. Mixed grouping; steady or increasing enrollment.

5. Drama Production (A, B, C). An advanced course in acting, set design, techniques, and all phases of dramatics. Involves production of the school play. Prerequisite: Acting or an introductory course. Mixed and advanced grouping; steady enrollment.

6. Comedy and Protest (C). A drama course specializing in the reading and study of the two types of acting and plays involving them. Advanced grouping; steady enrollment.

7. Stage Design (C). A non acting course involving the study and production of stage settings, props, scenery, and special effects used in dramatics. Class usually works in conjunction with acting and drama production groups on school drama projects. Mixed to average grouping; increasing enrollment.


9. Film Study (C). A course involving the viewing, evaluation, comparison, and criticism of the motion picture as a creative art form, and its effects as a commentary on society. Mixed grouping; increasing enrollment.
Journalism

1. Journalism 1 (A, B, C). An introductory course in reporting techniques; survey of newspaper production, journalistic style. Usually restricted to juniors and seniors; a prerequisite to other journalism courses. Mixed to advanced grouping; enrollment restricted but a popular course.

   2.1 Newspaper Production. An advanced class centered around the writing and production and selling of a regular school newspaper with the students serving as staff members specializing in editing, reporting, layout, circulation, photography, etc.. Advanced grouping; steady enrollment.

   2.2 Yearbook Production. Similar to Newspaper Production; centered around publication of a school yearbook. Advanced grouping; steady enrollment.

Communications

1. Capsule English (C). A series of mini courses over a one year period (for full credit), involving three to eight week concentrations in special areas of literature, composition, and usage. Average grouping; increasing enrollment.

2. Developmental Reading (B, C). Also called Reading Improvement, a course designed to aid the individual student in reading comprehension, accuracy, speed, and interpretation. Students usually are advised by other teachers upon recognition of a reading problem. A lab course in some schools with some students enrolled for varying lengths of time. Low to mixed grouping: steady enrollment.


4. Mass Media (C). Involves a survey of the various types of mass media and their impact on society; methods of propaganda and advertising; editorial policy in news coverage. Mixed or low grouping; increasing enrollment.

5. Radio and Television (C). Similar to Mass Media, but concentrating on broadcast media - radio and television, and its uses and effects as compared to the printed media. Advanced grouping: declining enrollment.
6. Speed Reading (3, C). A laboratory course for both students desiring increased rates for self development, and those placed by teachers or advisors because of comprehension or reading rate difficulties in other classes. Similar to Reading Improvement. Facilitates tachistoscope, reading tests, and other devices. Mixed grouping; increasing enrollment.

Humanities

1. American Cultural Studies (3). A team-taught course combining American History and American Literature which compares historical fact with literary theme and illusion of periods of American development. Offered two semesters for two credits each semester, one for English and one for history. Mixed grouping; increasing enrollment.

2. Critical Thinking (C). A combination literature and composition class involving the reading and discussion of critical prose and the personal evaluation in writing assignments. Stresses organization, logic, and maturity in reasoning. Advanced grouping; steady or declining enrollment.

3. The Humanities (3, C). A survey of the art forms of music, dramatics, literature, and mythology as contributions to the philosophical and sociological aspects of humanity through the ages. Advanced to mixed grouping; steady enrollment.

4. Teen-Age Problems (C). A discussion and research course involving current problems, social adjustment, education, career placement, parental and family relations, and other problems faced by adolescents. Mixed grouping; increasing enrollment.

5. Thematic Course - Parapsychology/Mythology (C). A highly specialized, two part course: 1. studies of Greek, Roman, and Norse myths through reading and discussions; the influences of these cultures; and 2. a look at fields of parapsychology and the supernatural (extra-sensory perception, astrology, spiritualism, etc.). Advanced grouping; increasing enrollment.
DISCONTINUED COURSES

The following courses have been discontinued from the curriculum of one or more of the surveyed schools for the reasons accompanying their titles. Some of the courses have been listed among current courses, but they have been dropped by other schools.

1. Structure of English (low enrollment)
2. Classical Literature (staffing shortage)
3. Contemporary Literature (combined with another course)
4. Creative Writing (combined with another course)
5. English Literature (low enrollment)
6. Independent Media Learning (combined)
7. Major American Authors (combined)
8. Many Faces of Language (low enrollment)
9. Oral Interpretation (low enrollment)
10. Practical English (lack of interest)
11. Problem Solving (school returning to traditional curriculum)
12. Structural English (lack of interest)
13. Technical Writing (low enrollment)
14. Vocational English (not accomplishing objectives)

PROPOSED COURSES

The following course titles were listed by the schools for future addition to the curriculum. Again, some of the courses are already in the program at other schools.
1. American Literature and Humanities
2. Basic Reading
3. College Prep English
4. Contemporary Literature
5. Debate
6. English 9, 10, 11 (traditional program)
7. English Workshop
8. Everyday English
9. Expository Writing
10. Filmmaking
11. Grammar
12. Language Skills in Daily Living
13. Multi-Media
14. Structure of Language
15. Vocational English
16. World Masterpieces
Chapter V

GENERALIZATION, SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been the purpose of this report to survey and summarize the English electives programs of forty-two Iowa high schools in order to determine the types of courses now being offered, the extent of ability grouping involved in these courses, and the names of the courses being dropped and added to the curricula. In this chapter, the outcome of the survey will be evaluated. Among the issues illuminated by a survey of this type are general trends of enrollment, the amount of success realized in the programs, the capabilities of small schools in tackling electives, and the extent of individualized instruction brought about by electives. After each of these issues is discussed, a list of recommendations for electives programs will follow.

CONCLUSIONS

The general trend of enrollment, as indicated by the schools, was steady or slightly increasing for the majority of courses in each of the seven areas, used for classification in Chapter IV, even though the number of declining and/or
discontinued courses may seem high. This decline or discontinuation may, in part, be attributable to an overall drop in total high school enrollments in Iowa in recent years (reflecting a stabilizing population). Changing graduation requirements (as mentioned earlier in this report) may also have contributed to the decline of some courses, while others may have dropped in enrollment because of the lesser emphasis on college education.

The apparent success or failure of the concept of an elective program in English in the high school is, at this time, difficult to measure or forecast. In side comments written by the teachers who filled out the surveys, it was revealed that most of the schools have offered an electives program for two years or less. One school, however, reported that it was dropping its entire elective program and returning to a traditional curriculum of required courses in grades nine through twelve.

The sizeable number of courses not designated for any specific student level of ability (these were labeled as "mixed" in the course descriptions) may be an indication of a trend toward heterogeneity, or at least an effort by the curriculum planners in this direction. However, the indication of a non-grouping intent by a school for a particular course may have, in actuality, resulted in a form of grouping based on a number of factors, including the course's title or
content, the instructor's reputation, and even the time of day of its offering.

An imbalance is readily seen in the smaller number and percentage of courses designated for low ability grouping on the one hand, as compared with those for high or advanced grouping. A closer study might have discovered that since the English requirements extend only through grades 10 or 11 in nearly all of the schools, and since most students of low ability would not likely enroll in any further English courses than are necessary, this low percentage could be seen at least partially justified. Three courses, Many Faces of Language, Practical English, and Vocational English, were among those discontinued due to lack of interest or low enrollment, and all three were designated for the low ability grouping in the surveys returned.

Sizeable electives programs in small schools (500 or less enrollment) understandably create problems. Staffing fifteen or twenty elective courses with four English teachers is nearly impossible, without creating burdensome workloads and a scheduling dilemma. Extremely low class enrollments and text expenses are hard to justify to the school board and to the community, and, as a result, most small districts have limited their electives programs to five or six courses, or made use of the mini-course concept within existing courses.

In the long run, based on the overall trend of the surveys used in this report, the most successful programs of
English electives in Iowa high schools appear to have been those designed with a balance of courses in each of the seven language arts areas, and in each ability group. The term "successful" is derived from enrollment increases, the size of the program, the amount of new courses being added, the lack of existing courses being dropped, and a number of side comments written on the surveys by the teachers and other curriculum developers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the writer's experience, the survey, and related literature, the following recommendations are made for designing a program of elective courses:

1. First of all, try to determine the overall state of the present English program in the school. In some cases, existing survey or required courses were broken down into mini-courses of two to four weeks' duration without a major overhaul of the curriculum. The opposite may also be true, as in the case of one small high school which returned to a traditional program of required courses. Its program of electives failed because the students (or the community) still insisted upon general survey courses without specialization.1

2. Determine the needs of the students. The use of

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1 Based on side comments written on a survey from Fort Bragg, Iowa.
reading tests, and others, along with previous English grades and personal conferences with the students will help to find out what skill areas are lacking, and what interest areas are in demand.

3. In all phases of electives program development, work in close contact with students, parents, faculty, and administration. Letters to parents, surveys, assemblies, and faculty meetings have proven most helpful to many schools.

4. Design the program of electives around what the students need and want to learn, not necessarily what the staff wants to teach. Many of the discontinued courses suffered from lack of interest and low enrollments primarily because their content was a "pet project" of a teacher, without advance consultation with students.

5. Create a balance of courses from the seven areas (literature, composition, usage, etc.), allowing a variety of each type of course to be offered throughout the day as much as possible. Thus the student who wants Harvard physics and the short story can get both of them without conflicts. This may be difficult to arrange in a small school, however.

6. Create a number of courses for low, average, and higher ability students as well as "untracked" or mixed courses in each of the skill areas. This should be done in proportion to the actual percentages of students in these groups enrolled in the school.
7. Rotate the teaching assignments each year, or possibly each term. This will avoid the stigma of attaching a course to a particular teacher, which often causes students to avoid a course that they want or to select one which they do not need.

8. Make the counselors or advisors fully aware of the content and objectives of each course so that they may properly guide their counselees into courses which they need and are capable of handling.

9. Work out a pre-registration system. In the fall of the year, the students should pre-register or indicate a preference for English courses for the following year. This can be done in the classroom or with the counselor, and will help to determine in advance the teaching schedule and which courses will remain open.

10. Maintain at least one year (freshman or sophomore or both) for a required course in English with review and skill development in grammar, literature, and composition prior to any transition to an electives program.
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Hildreth, Lillian, Chairman, English Department, Lincoln High School, Des Moines, Iowa. Personal Interview, April 10, 1973.

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Chairman, English Department
Abraham Lincoln High School
Ninth and Bell Streets
Des Moines, Iowa

Dear Sir:

For my graduate project at Drake University, I am conducting a survey aimed at determining the types of elective language arts courses now in the curriculum of the high schools in the state, the intended student clientele (ability group) of each course, and the enrollment trends of the courses. I would sincerely appreciate your assistance in this matter, if you could fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me via the enclosed stamped envelope.

If a synopsis of your language arts program is available, please send a copy and disregard all but Part I of the questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Harold A. Swihart, Jr.
APPENDIX B

SURVEY FORM, PART I

ENGLISH ELECTIVES IN IOWA HIGH SCHOOLS: A SURVEY

Part I.

1. What is the current enrollment in your school?
   - a) less than 500
   - b) between 500 and 1,000
   - c) over 1,000

2. What grades are included in your school?
   - a) 6-12
   - b) 9-12
   - c) 10-12

3. Which grade level is the last which requires an English credit?
   - a) 9
   - b) 10
   - c) 11
   - d) 12

4. Does your school have a program of electives in language arts?
   - a) yes
   - b) no

If the answer to number 4 is yes, please proceed to Part II.

Check here if you would like a summary of the results of this survey, and list your name and address on the bottom of this page.
APPENDIX C

SURVEY FORM, PART II

Part II

Please list in the table below the elective language arts courses currently offered at your school, plus those discontinued, and any which are being considered for future addition to the curriculum.

Present Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Semesters Available</th>
<th>Ability Group</th>
<th>Average Enrollment</th>
<th>Enrollment Trend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1 If course content is not readily available from title, a brief synopsis on the reverse side would be appreciated.

2 Ability group includes high, average, low and varied competence.

3 Enrollment trend signifies increase, decline and stability over past three years.
APPENDIX C (continued)

SURVEY FORM, PART II

Discontinued Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Ability Group</th>
<th>Average Enrollment</th>
<th>When Dropped</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

New Courses Planned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Ability Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
APPENDIX D

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Abraham Lincoln High School
Des Moines, Iowa

Adel High School
Adel, Iowa

Albert City-Truesdale High School
Albert City, Iowa

Albia High School
Albia, Iowa

Ames High School
Ames, Iowa

Anita Junior Senior High School
Anita, Iowa

Belle Plaine High School
Belle Plaine, Iowa

Bettendorf High School
Bettendorf, Iowa

Burlington Community High School
Burlington, Iowa

Central High School
Sioux City, Iowa

Charles City High School
Charles City, Iowa

Clarke Community High School
Pocata, Iowa

Clinton High School
Clinton, Iowa

Denver Junior Senior High School
Denver, Iowa
APPENDIX D (continued)

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Dexfield Junior Senior High School
Dexfield, Iowa

Eagle Grove High School
Eagle Grove, Iowa

East High School
Des Moines, Iowa

Fairfield High School
Fairfield, Iowa

Fort Dodge High School
Fort Dodge, Iowa

Guttenberg Junior Senior High School
Guttenberg, Iowa

Harlan High School
Harlan, Iowa

Independence High School
Independence, Iowa

Indianola High School
Indianola, Iowa

Jefferson High School
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Jesup High School
Jesup, Iowa

LeMars High School
LeMars, Iowa

Maple Valley High School
Mapleton, Iowa

Marshalltown High School
Marshalltown, Iowa

Ottumwa High School
Ottumwa, Iowa
APPENDIX D (continued)

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Pomeroy High School
Pomeroy, Iowa

Red Oak High School
Red Oak, Iowa

Sabula High School
Sabula, Iowa

Southeast Polk Junior Senior High School
Altoona, Iowa

South Tama Community High School
Tama, Iowa

Urbandale High School
Urbandale, Iowa

Van Suren Community High School
Teosauqua, Iowa

Watertown High School
Dubuque, Iowa

Washington High School
Waterloo, Iowa

West High School
Waterloo, Iowa

Webster City High School
Webster City, Iowa

West Trench High School
West Trench, Iowa

West Marshall High School
State Center, Iowa