

### Reenactment of Lincoln-Douglas Debates, 1923

These debates were staged by the senior class of 1923 and were documented in the college yearbook, *The Tekoa*.

All images courtesy of Westfield State University Archives.

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

**“Our Life’s Work”:  
Rhetorical Preparation and Teacher Training at the  
Westfield State Normal School, 1844–1932**

BETH ANN ROTHERMEL



**Editor’s Introduction:** *When we think of nineteenth and early twentieth century teacher-training schools, we tend to rely on a fundamental assumption: that the work of a primary school teacher was intellectually undemanding, consisting largely of exercises focused on rote memorization and correctness, and thus the schools that prepared future teachers for their work must not have been academically rigorous. And while this characterization may have been true of many teacher-training schools in that period, it was certainly not the case at Westfield State Normal School. Beth Ann Rothermel’s illuminating and incisive investigation of archival materials at the college (now Westfield State University) reveals an intellectually rigorous curriculum, one that embraced rhetorical theory and asked students to employ their theoretical understanding in the service of a wide range of discourse practices. The curriculum included not just rhetoric and oratory, but also more traditional disciplines such as chemistry, botany, geometry, and philosophy.*

*Around the turn of the century, reformers attempted to institute a more utilitarian and “practical” approach to teacher training, but many faculty at Westfield resisted the trend, continuing to emphasize the more demanding and intellectually rich pedagogy. In short, the young women and men who were preparing to become teachers at Westfield State Normal School were consistently exposed to a rigorous and varied curriculum,*

*one that certainly rivaled the academic offerings from the region's more well-known and prestigious colleges and universities. This rich pedagogy remained in place for more than one hundred years, despite the repeated efforts of "reformers" to water down the curriculum. Faculty and students appreciated and embraced a demanding course of academics which inspired generations of teachers in the Commonwealth. These issues remain alive within contemporary debates over teacher training.*

*Dr. Rothermel is a professor of English at Westfield State University. Her research includes articles on the history of American women's rhetorical education, especially at normal schools, along with book chapters in edited collections in the field of rhetoric and composition. This article was originally published as a chapter in *Local Histories: Reading the Archives of Composition*, edited by Patricia Donahue and Gretchen Flesher Moon (2007). It is reprinted with the permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press. Two other chapters in this collection focus on the history of education in Massachusetts: "Vida Scudder in the Classroom and in the Archives," by Julie Garbus, and "Life in the Margins: Student Writing and Curricular Change at Fitchburg Normal School, 1895–1910."<sup>†</sup>*

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In 1923, the all-female senior class at the Westfield State Normal School staged a series of debates. Although these debates focused mainly on civic issues, they also included a reenactment of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, presented before the entire school in a general assembly. Westfield's 1923 yearbook celebrates the prime players of this drama, noting that "Helen Spelman looked the part of a politician in presiding. Helyne Mousley made a superb Lincoln, and Ruth Grady an inimical Douglas. One could almost imagine one's self as actually participating in the noted campaign for the senatorship of Illinois."<sup>1</sup> The women aimed to "reproduce the spirit and the main issues" of this famous historical event. It was not, however, the first time

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<sup>†</sup> Archival materials used in preparing this article are available in Westfield State University's Patterson Archive, located in Ely Library. I am indebted to the painstaking efforts of Dr. Robert Brown, a former history professor at Westfield State University, who with limited institutional support created and sustained the college's archive for more than two decades. I would also like to thank WSU archivist Karen Canary for her invaluable assistance in gathering and preparing the illustrations used in this article.

that female students at Westfield had imagined themselves into positions of rhetorical power. Westfield's newly enfranchised senior class was, in fact, drawing on rhetorical theories and practices critical to the school's academic programs since the mid-nineteenth century.

In the introduction to his documentary history *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875–1925*, John C. Brereton observes that we “still do not know enough about the connections between college course work and the public and private examples of female rhetoric.” Scholars of rhetoric and composition have been actively addressing this shortfall in a number of ways. The works of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Annette Kolodny, and Nicole Tonkovich on individual women rhetors and their educational backgrounds have revealed the “range of attitudes and instruction among women rhetoricians.”<sup>2</sup> Scholars such as Vickie Ricks, Kathryn Conway, JoAnn Campbell, and Joy Rouse have studied the rhetorical education offered to women at private women's colleges and seminaries. More recently, scholars have turned their attention to alternative sites of rhetorical instruction, focusing on institutions that educated women of more varied racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. This article contributes to ongoing research on the history of rhetorical education by looking closely at the rhetorical training of late nineteenth and early-twentieth century women at the Westfield State Normal School, the second public and first co-educational normal school in the country (opened in 1839).

Although founded as a co-educational institution, the percentage of men in the student body declined rapidly. Westfield's precursor institution located in Barre, Massachusetts, was forty-five percent male (1839–42). In its first few years the Westfield State Normal School was thirty-seven percent male; this figure dropped to twenty-four percent (1849–1859); then to twelve percent (1860–81); reaching a mere five percent during the years 1882–96. After 1898, only a handful of males attended until a special program to prepare junior high teachers was inaugurated in 1938. The drastic decline in male population reflected the rapid feminization of primary school teaching as a profession. Whereas in 1834, fifty-six percent of the state's primary school teachers were female, in 1880, eighty-six percent were female.<sup>3</sup>

The normal school was a distinct institution designed mainly for the purpose of training elementary school teachers (K–8th grades). A high school degree was not a requirement for admission until 1895 and a certificate was the only “degree” conferred until the 1930s. As a result, the state's normal schools quickly lost their male students to an array of more prestigious institutions, including high schools, academies, and the state's many private colleges. Hence, this article focuses on the experiences of the overwhelmingly

female students at the Westfield State Normal School from 1844 to 1932, the years during which the institution operated exclusively as a “normal” or teacher-training school.

My historical survey shows that the road on which rhetorical education traveled at Westfield was a complicated one. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Westfield State Normal School developed a program of study that emphasized the value of future teachers studying rhetoric. The curriculum introduced future teachers to rhetorical theory and guided them in applying that theory to a wide array of discourse practices, including oratory, debate, and written composition. Such a curriculum aimed not just to expand students’ intellectual powers, as other institutions educating women argued it did; it prepared the future teacher to foster learning, win respect, and achieve meaningful moral influence among her pupils. However, archival research shows that in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, these objectives, and the curriculum Westfield had built to achieve them, came into question. Shifting views on the purpose of rhetorical education for students training to be teachers, especially those who were women, led the Massachusetts State Board of Education to pressure Westfield into adopting utilitarian approaches to their program of rhetorical study. Rather than exposing future teachers to varied rhetorical practices and the complex theories that guided their use, normal schools were to train teachers how to speak and write correctly and how to pass those habits on to primary school students.

Some of Westfield’s early-twentieth-century administrators responded favorably to such demands. But Westfield’s late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century faculty asserted that along with “correct expression,” “force” and “fluency” were essential attributes of the successful primary school teacher. Such attributes, they argued, were best cultivated by exposing students to more complex rhetorical theory along with a wider array of rhetorical practices than state officials advocated. Normal school faculty, thus, followed administrators’ directives only in part, designing courses in written and oral expression, along with varied extracurricular activities, that aimed to help students understand the processes of communication and become rhetorically powerful classroom teachers. My review of varied archival sources leads me to assert, in fact, that within the context of its late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century teacher-training program, Westfield may have exposed its predominantly female students to a more complex rhetorical knowledge than many other universities and colleges of its day.

The archive that has given rise to this hypothesis is a rich but fragmented one. As Carole Gerson points out, archival collections poorly document



women's lives. While Westfield course catalogues, grade books, and student records suggest much about the official curriculum female students were likely to encounter at Westfield, they do not reveal much about women's day-to-day experiences at the school. Thus, in trying to build a complex picture of Westfield, I have consulted a range of texts such as alumni letters, graduation programs, yearbooks, and student notebooks; I have also considered the extracurriculum as well as the curriculum. These sources, lodged in what Karlyn Kohrs Campbell terms the "crevices" of the archive, have revealed more about the ways gender and educational ideologies influenced the rhetorical preparation of Westfield's female students. They have also provided keen glimpses into the ways teachers and students consciously and unconsciously resisted such ideologies.<sup>4</sup>



Students and Faculty, the Westfield State Normal School, circa 1860

## “WELL-READ WOMEN OF GOOD TASTE”: THE NORMAL SCHOOL CONTEXT, 1838–1877

Memorial Hall Museum in Deerfield, Massachusetts recently hosted an exhibit of photographs taken by Mary and Frances Allen, two sisters who graduated from the Westfield State Normal School in 1876.<sup>5</sup> Innovators in the world of pictorial photography, the Allen sisters won a number of awards, published their work in national periodicals, and exhibited it around the country. They were also business women, active members of their community, and published writers.<sup>6</sup> In 1901, critic Frances Benjamin Johnson named them “the foremost women photographers of their time.”

But the Allen sisters’ “chosen career” was not actually photography. They began their careers as teachers, until hearing loss forced both to quit. It is interesting that Johnson also noted that “without any special training but that of well-read women of good taste they have put character, dignity and artistic feeling into their pictures.”<sup>7</sup> True, they had no special training in the field of photography. But the Allen sisters did have a special training—one that prepared them to teach. Their two years at the Westfield State Normal School did more than prepare them to “read well” and with “good taste,” exposing them to a rich array of sciences and to a number of theories on the child (a frequent subject of their photography). Westfield also honed their rhetorical powers, providing them with tools of expression useful to their writing and photography. The low cost of that training may have been what led the Allen sisters to attend Westfield.<sup>8</sup> But Westfield also had won itself a national reputation that likely made it a desirable choice for the Allen sisters;<sup>9</sup> their letters home during their time at the school “brimmed,” in fact, with enthusiasm over “all aspects of school life.”<sup>10</sup>

When the Allen sisters arrived at the Westfield State Normal School in the fall of 1874 to begin the two year normal training program, they joined a student body consisting of 138 women and 18 men. The school was soon to celebrate its thirty-fifth anniversary, having been established in 1839 as part of the Common School Movement. Public normal school founders Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, among others, had argued that the state’s many new primary (common) schools needed well-trained teachers and that public normal schools could help to fill the demand, especially if they educated women along with men. Building on the work of such educational reformers as Catharine Beecher and Emma Willard, Mann argued that teaching would serve as a way for women, who were already naturally inclined to working with children, “to expand the circumference of the home.” Facing public skepticism about the need for normal schools and about the appropriateness of



Westfield State Normal School, 1846–1892

educating women to become teachers, Mann assured the public that schools like Westfield would not duplicate the work of colleges and universities, but rather drill future teachers in the subjects they would teach, verify that they were of “good moral character,” and teach them how to keep order in a school.<sup>11</sup>

By the time the Allen sisters arrived at Westfield, women had a more established place in primary school classrooms, and had even made some forays into secondary education and educational administration.<sup>12</sup> The public had largely embraced the notion that teaching was a respectable means by which a woman could exert her superior moral influence and find expression for her gentle and nurturing nature. And yet the curriculum that the Allen sisters encountered at Westfield did more for female teachers than simply verify their character or “catch them up” on the subjects they would need to teach (e.g., arithmetic, geography, and reading). Westfield catalogues suggest that women at Westfield in the 1870s encountered a rigorous program of academic study, one that required advanced work in subjects such as chemistry, botany, geometry, mental and moral philosophy, and the theory and art of teaching. More significantly, the Allen sisters’ rhetorical training consisted not merely of orthography, reading, and spelling, but also grammar



and analysis of the English language, rhetoric, and British literature; they also completed general exercises in composition and extempore speaking throughout their period of study.<sup>13</sup> With its “mix of oral and written composition throughout four years,” and “a single rhetoric course to provide a theoretical grounding,” Westfield’s rhetorical curriculum resembled that of many a neighboring college.<sup>14</sup>

Westfield’s curriculum of 1876 was not new to the school either. The school’s early leaders—which included professor of rhetoric Samuel P. Newman, the Reverend Emerson Davis, and professor of rhetoric John W. Dickinson—had not subscribed to Mann’s view that future teachers mainly needed to drill in basic subjects. Rather, they embraced progressive educators like Caleb Atwater, who argued: “the main objects of educating females are precisely the same with those of educating the other sex—to develop all their powers and faculties, and to prepare them for happiness and usefulness...In addition to the common branches of education...we wish to see superadded, geography, chemistry, botany, vocal music, astronomy, algebra, rhetoric, mineralogy, geology, mechanics, natural and moral philosophy.”<sup>15</sup> Studies in subjects like rhetoric quickly became cornerstones of Westfield’s curriculum.<sup>16</sup>

Since views on women’s education like Atwater’s were not widely embraced by the public, early leaders had to justify their decision to require advanced study in such areas as rhetoric. The fact that the school was coeducational likely helped to legitimize some advanced study.<sup>17</sup> More significant, however, was the argument that intensive study in rhetorical theory and practice would lead to more powerful teachers. To master the art of teaching, students needed to engage in a complex philosophical investigation of the mind—an investigation to which the study of rhetoric contributed.

Advanced study in rhetorical theory and practice would help teachers to “convey knowledge”—to use their discourse to foster learning, win respect, and achieve meaningful moral influence.<sup>18</sup> Westfield’s early leaders criticized conventional teaching methods that relied on rote memorization and conventional recitation, arguing that the teacher’s goal was, instead, to “infuse into young minds a thirst for improvement” and “call out [their pupils’] reasoning faculties.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, with its special focus on the role of the intellectual faculties within the communication process, and on the discourse practices commonly used within that process, rhetoric would help the future teacher to better understand and reach the minds of primary school pupils.

In his eighteenth year as principal when the Allen sisters arrived at Westfield, John W. Dickinson played a particularly significant role in making the link between effective teaching and rhetorical power an established one

in the school's curriculum, even as fewer and fewer male students were the recipients of that curriculum. A "dominant intellect in educational reform," Dickinson taught rhetoric courses at Westfield throughout his career.<sup>20</sup>

In an 1877 speech, Dickinson represented the powerful teacher as one who would never "distort" or "dwarf" "the mind of the child." His teaching in rhetoric aimed to help future teachers to avoid such disaster. The teacher who had investigated the minds of his or her pupils and employed varied and well-thought out rhetorical practices, such as inspired oratory and thoughtful discussion, would be best able to "take possession" of a classroom and to persuade pupils to adopt "lofty" ideals.<sup>21</sup> This teacher would likely make use of the Pestalozzian-influenced object method.

As scholars Kathryn Fitzgerald and Lucille M. Schultz have both suggested, Pestalozzian learning theories strongly influenced nineteenth-century common and normal school instruction.<sup>22</sup> Along with other normal school educators, Dickinson repeated Pestalozzi's call for a "benevolent classroom environment and a pedagogy that moved from the simple and concrete to the complex and abstract."<sup>23</sup> Observation and experience, along with "self-activity"—and not textbooks—were central to the pupil's learning process. Dickinson criticized teachers who depended heavily upon textbooks, arguing that the teacher should instead use "spoken words of his own as they are necessary to direct the pupil in thinking."<sup>24</sup>

In a lesson recorded by Westfield student Maria L. Tuttle in 1871, Dickinson illustrated this process of orally facilitating the thinking of pupils. He advised Tuttle and her peers to place pictures of vivid objects before the pupils and then ask thoughtful questions that would promote discussion of their associations. This activity would help pupils to cultivate "taste" and "judgement," both of which would form the foundations of "effective expression." Since teachers would need to engage in constant "oral teaching," Dickinson also exposed his students to the "requisites of a good orator."<sup>25</sup> Both male and female teachers would be better conveyers of knowledge were they able to appeal directly to the particular passions of their audience of primary school pupils. Dickinson provided students with opportunities to connect the theory they were learning in his classroom to practice by requiring them to engage in mock teaching lessons in front of their peers and inviting them to give public addresses on educational issues at graduations.<sup>26</sup> He also encouraged both male and female students to take active roles in the school's literary society. As members of the society, male and female students engaged in a variety of rhetorical activities, producing written and oral discourse of a persuasive and an informative nature.<sup>27</sup>



Students Graduating in 1889

By the 1870s, Dickinson's view that teacher preparation required a theoretically rich program of study had gained currency. Mariolina Salvatori's work on historical conceptions of pedagogy suggests that a number of nineteenth-century educators "insisted on the necessity to provide teachers with the theoretical knowledge (science) necessary to guide and control their practice (art)."<sup>28</sup> What may have set his work apart from that of other reformers, however, was the central role he gave to the study of rhetoric within that complex process of investigation. More to the point of this study, however, is that Dickinson and his predecessors' practice of connecting teaching power to rhetorical power would remain a common one at Westfield, empowering women like the Allen sisters both in and out of the classroom throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

### "OUR LIFE'S WORK": THE LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY CURRICULUM

The Allen sisters would have been among the last students at Westfield to attend lectures and recitations given by Dickinson, as he left in 1877 to become secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education. Through the work of scholars such as Dickinson, who traveled to normal schools around the country, Westfield and its curriculum had gained prestige.<sup>29</sup> Yet anxiety over what was an appropriate education for teachers, especially female

teachers, grew perhaps even more intense as more and more women entered the field; shifting perceptions about the role of women teachers may well have resulted in a number of significant changes in the curriculum, particularly in the rhetorical curriculum.

As Brereton notes, through the latter part of the nineteenth-century, colleges and universities replaced their traditional programs of rhetorical study with “new utilitarian writing courses” emphasizing “error correction” and “the five modes of discourse.” Robert Connors’ work *Composition-Rhetoric* provides a detailed account of this move away from studying the “actual process of communication” toward mastering the “lower level elements of mechanical correctness.”<sup>30</sup> A review of the Westfield catalogue and other school documents from the 1880s and 1890s suggests that this shift in emphasis occurred at Westfield as part of a larger overhaul of the curriculum. In the early 1880s, for instance, state officials pressured the Massachusetts Board of Education to standardize the curriculum at the Massachusetts normal schools. According to public officials, normal schools were not doing enough to prepare future teachers to exert control over and teach basic skills to an increasingly diverse (and to them foreign and unruly) primary school population.<sup>31</sup> While the normal schools had won some public respect, legislators and their supporters also remained concerned that normal schools were duplicating the higher academic work of other more prestigious institutions.<sup>32</sup>

Like its sister schools around the country, Westfield responded to such charges by asserting, both orally and in writing, that its course of study was primarily “professional” in nature and thus different from the curriculum at liberal arts colleges.<sup>33</sup> While it continued to require advanced study in many of the same subjects, claiming that these studies would increase their students’ intellectual powers, it did make some changes. The Massachusetts normal schools made the admissions requirements more rigorous, and they increased the amount of time spent covering educational theory and classroom methodology. They also adjusted the rhetorical curriculum to address concerns over normal school students’ written and spoken English. Instead of completing general school exercises in composition and extempore speaking as they had done previously, students entering Westfield in the 1880s were required to take two semesters of composition. The composition courses were to focus explicitly on technical matters such as “[c]apitals, punctuation, letter-writing, [and] business forms” as well as “paragraphing” and “spelling.”<sup>34</sup>

As Robert Connors and others have noted, gender ideology probably played a role in this shift towards formalized composition instruction. At

Westfield, 148 out of the 156 students enrolled in 1887 were women, largely from lower-middle class homes. The works of Michael Halloran, Elizabethada Wright, Nan Johnson, and others add support to such a claim, revealing the extent to which nineteenth-century norms defined women's rhetorical space. Women, it was believed, were better suited to producing certain forms of written communication (works of moral uplift or family correspondence); engaging in oral or written argument would compromise feminine modesty. As already noted, few questioned the right of a woman (at least a middle-class white woman) to pursue a career in teaching, deeming it an "acceptable, noble alternative to immediate motherhood and wifely duties"<sup>35</sup>; in the public mind, women teachers were *not*, however, training to become great orators.<sup>36</sup> Instead, they needed skill in aiding children to acquire correct spoken and written English.<sup>37</sup> With its focus on correct English, and on the forms of writing most necessary for a teacher outside of the classroom (letter writing and business forms), Westfield's new composition courses would provide more suitable preparation.

Yet in the 1880s and 1890s Westfield's rhetorical curriculum required more than two semesters of composition instruction. Students continued to take a course in rhetoric much like the course Dickinson had taught during his tenure; and even as they gave more attention to written products, Westfield's composition and rhetoric teachers continued to connect the mastery of the art of oral and written expression with powerful teaching. Leaders of the 1880s and 1890s shared their predecessors' beliefs that exposure to a variety of discourse practices, including oral and written forms, and to the theories behind their use, would best prepare the teacher for her difficult work. These practices, furthermore, were introduced to Westfield students not by men, but rather by women, many of whom had graduated from the Westfield normal school themselves.

In the 1870s and 1880s several of Dickinson's former female students returned to Westfield, becoming instructors both in the composition and rhetoric courses. For instance, from 1879–1890 Sarah Kneil, an 1867 graduate, returned to teach composition. She also covered the rhetoric course for a short time. Kneil may have introduced students to the practical forms and conventions of composition, but she also sought more from her students. A former student described Kneil as an "inspired teacher. . . one original thought meant more to her than quantities of parrotty reproduction," suggesting that like Dickinson, Kneil sought to produce teachers who might employ moving discourse in their classrooms.<sup>38</sup>

Elvira Carver, an 1865 graduate, was another of Dickinson's students who returned to teach at Westfield. Along with courses in algebra and geography,



she taught Westfield's rhetoric course from 1878–1883, and from 1885–1887. According to school catalogues, her course resembled Dickinson's, introducing students to "figurative language and qualities of style." It included "composition writing and criticism," but also "a study of the mind and its qualities." Since there is but little information available about Carver's teaching, it is difficult to determine how much attention her courses gave to such practices as oral and written argument. But like the midwestern instructors discussed in Kathryn Fitzgerald's work on European pedagogy and the normal school, Carver drew on a different intellectual tradition than her peers at neighboring colleges. Like most of her Westfield contemporaries, she had been well schooled in more interactive pedagogical theories like those of Pestalozzi, theories that emphasized "self-activity." Not surprisingly, she shared Dickinson's disdain for textbooks and his commitment to "oral teaching." In a preface to a geography text that she wrote in 1887, Carver noted that her text was to be a guide only for the teacher's "oral instruction"—to help teachers "train pupils to observe and think instead of memorizing."<sup>39</sup> Teaching the theories and practices of rhetoric was another way for her to enable future teachers to teach orally with success.<sup>40</sup>

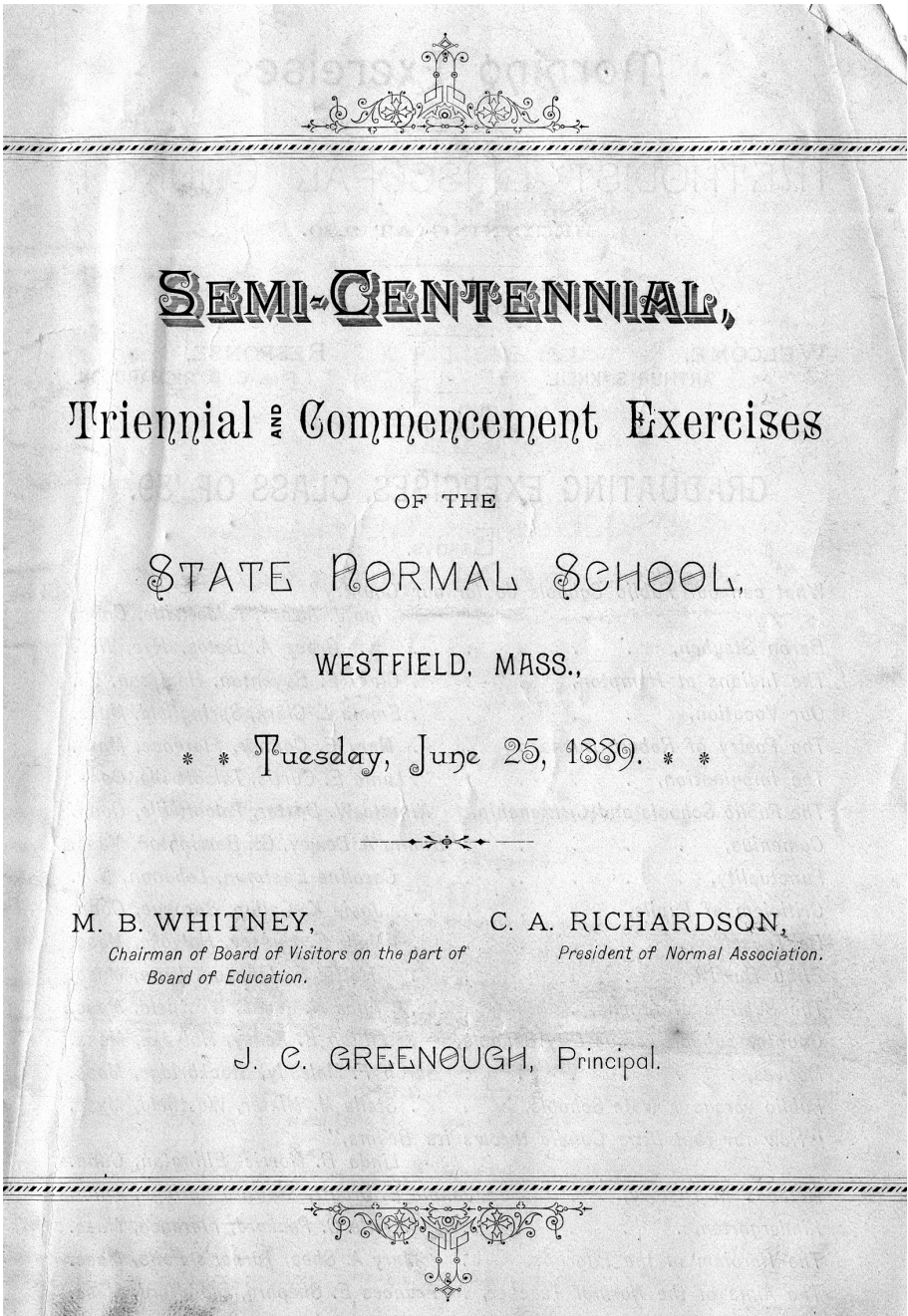
There is additional evidence that "effective oral expression," if not the art of oratory, remained a large concern of the rhetorical curriculum. Westfield women of the 1880s and 1890s appear to have embraced the power of oral and written argument more readily than those of previous generations. Course outlines, for example, suggest that in their civics course, a course also taught by a woman (Frances Gaylord) from 1891–1897, Westfield



Elvira Carver taught arithmetic, geometry, and rhetoric; she also authored a text on the teaching of geography.

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Following pages: Graduation program, including a list of essays presented by graduating students, from 1889.



In 1889 the school celebrated its "semi-centennial" marking fifty years. Of the 142 students enrolled that year, five were men.



. . Morning Exercises . .

AT THE  
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,  
BEGINNING AT 9.30.

—\*—  
Organ Voluntary.

WELCOME,  
ARTHUR S. KNEIL.

RESPONSE,  
Pres. C. B. RICHARDSON.

—\*—  
Music.

GRADUATING EXERCISES, CLASS OF '89.

Essays.

<i>What can our Public Schools do for our Country?</i>	
	<i>Ida J. Alvord, Talcottville, Conn.</i>
<i>Baron Steuben, . . . . .</i>	<i>Grace A. Bates, Rye, N.Y.</i>
<i>The Indians at Hampton, . . . . .</i>	<i>Clara E. Boyenton, Hampton, Va.</i>
<i>Our Vocation, . . . . .</i>	<i>Emma L. Clark, Springfield, Mass.</i>
<i>The Poetry of Robert Burns, . . . . .</i>	<i>Mary E. Connor, Florence, Mass.</i>
<i>The Imagination, . . . . .</i>	<i>Lanie E. Curtis, Talcottville, Conn.</i>
<i>The Public Schools and Citizenship, . . . . .</i>	<i>Ninetta W. Dexter, Talcottville, Conn.</i>
<i>Comenius, . . . . .</i>	<i>Emma A. Dewey, Gt. Barrington, Mass.</i>
<i>Punctuality, . . . . .</i>	<i>Caroline Eastman, Lebanon, N.H.</i>
<i>Criticism of Pupils, . . . . .</i>	<i>Josie K. Gallup, Sprague, Conn.</i>
<i>Be Thyself, . . . . .</i>	<i>Mary E. Hussey, Holyoke, Mass.</i>
<i>Elihu Burritt, . . . . .</i>	<i>Hattie F. Johnson, Lynn, Mass.</i>
<i>The Schools of Athens, . . . . .</i>	<i>Alice M. Jones, Westfield, Mass.</i>
<i>Country Schools versus City Schools, . . . . .</i>	<i>Lillian E. Kelley, Holyoke, Mass.</i>
<i>Motives, . . . . .</i>	<i>Sarah F. Maleady, Stockbridge, Mass.</i>
<i>Public versus Private Schools, . . . . .</i>	<i>Stella M. Mixer, Westfield, Mass.</i>
<i>"How far that little Candle throws its Beams,"</i>	
	<i>Linda B. Morris, Ellington, Conn.</i>
<i>Methods in History, . . . . .</i>	<i>Jennie E. Orcutt, Stafford Springs, Conn.</i>
<i>Kindergarten, . . . . .</i>	<i>Myrtle C. Packard, Florence, Mass.</i>
<i>The Heroism of the Pilgrims, . . . . .</i>	<i>Mary A. Shea, Turner's Falls, Mass.</i>
<i>The Aims of the Normal Teacher, . . . . .</i>	<i>Frances E. Shepard, Blandford, Mass.</i>

Note the wide variety of topics for the student essays. Most students completed a two-year course of study.

Music.

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ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATES.

Prin. J. C. GREENOUGH.

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AWARDING OF DIPLOMAS,

A. P. STONE, LL.D.

---

Class Hymn.

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SEMI-CENTENNIAL ADDRESS,

JOHN BASCOM, Ex-Pres. of Wisconsin University.

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Music.

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Fifty Years of the Westfield Normal School,

J. W. DICKINSON, Sec'y of Board of Education.

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Music.

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COLLATION AT NORMAL HALL, 1 P. M.

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Triennial Reunion at the School Building, 3 P. M.

Brief volunteer addresses will be called for, and it is hoped that a large number will respond.

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RECEPTION AT NORMAL HALL, 8 TO 10 P. M.

In 1889 former Westfield Principal John W. Dickinson (1856-77), then Secretary of the State Board of Education (1877-94), gave the final address, "Fifty Years of the Westfield Normal School."

students continued to learn about and practice the procedures for oral debate.<sup>41</sup> Women in the 1880s also exhibited a greater willingness to engage in extemporaneous debate as members of the school's literary society.<sup>42</sup> Since there were few men attending the school, women usually debated one another, although records also show them going up against their few male peers. These debates took up largely educational issues, such as the question of whether "high schools ought not be supported by the state," and whether "[w]omen should be educated to the same degree that man is."<sup>43</sup> Women of the society also honed their oral abilities by giving dramatic readings, participating in informal discussions, and giving extemporaneous speeches when they became society officers.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, during the 1880s and 1890s, students at Westfield were required to write what was termed a "thesis," often delivering these orally before an audience during graduation.<sup>45</sup> Fifteen students, thirteen of whom were women, delivered addresses in June 1887, speaking on such issues as "Professional Meetings," "Dangers of the Common School," "The Teacher as a Citizen," and "The Province of the Public Schools." These addresses were, admittedly, "readings." And yet the presenters were praised for their oral performances. One editor described the 1887 addresses as

short because the thought is rigidly condensed, each replete with valuable suggestions. The reading was such that every essay was distinctly heard in the extreme rear of the church. Some were rendered with that grace and charm of tone and modulation which gave pleasure to the listener even if he was careless of the thought. The exercises gave abundant proof both of the excellence of the professional training of the school, and of the value of the course of study as a means of literary training.<sup>46</sup>

A graduation essay written sometime in the 1880s provides additional evidence that those attending Westfield in the late nineteenth-century felt empowered by their rhetorical education. The writer of "Our Life's Work" notes that among women's many new talents is the "skill of composition which thrills and animates the mind to noble action." As evidence of women's potential to inspire such action both in and outside of the classroom, she provides her listeners with a list of famous women public figures of humble origins, some of whom were educators known for their public appearances and powerful discourse, including Mary Lyons, Anne Judson, Anna Dickinson, Jenny Lind, and Sarah Bernhardt.<sup>47</sup>



Westfield women's participation in such events was probably made easier by a number of social factors. Female students were likely emboldened by the numbers of women pursuing more public professions—professions in fields such as school administration or social work that required them to speak publicly from podiums. The suffrage and temperance movements had drawn area women into their folds.<sup>48</sup> In some states, women could vote in school board elections. A number of Westfield's women graduates from the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s had gone on to positions not just in primary schools, but as school board officials, normal school instructors, college professors, founders of schools, and leaders in social service organizations like the YWCA—positions, in short, that required skilled oratory outside of the classroom as well as within.<sup>49</sup> These graduates returned to Westfield to give addresses and share their experiences during graduations and school anniversaries, offering inspiration to students of the late-nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Their visits reinforced Westfield's commitment to a more complex rhetorical education—an education that would familiarize students with the communication process, and the discourse practices that have traditionally characterized it, and thus transform them into influential teachers.

## GATEKEEPERS OR GUARDIANS: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Westfield State Normal School historians have often tended to choose the nineteenth-century as opposed to the early twentieth as the focus of their studies. This tendency may stem from the fact that archival materials documenting the co-educational nineteenth century are more plentiful than those available for the all-women's institution of the early twentieth. And yet historians of the college, as well as those writing about normal schools more generally, tend to represent the nineteenth century as the more innovative one at normal schools—the one that trained both women and men to become intellectually engaged primary school teachers, as well as normal school teachers, administrators, social reformers, and artists (like the Allen sisters).

For instance, according to Robert Brown, by the early twentieth century, Westfield had become “but a shadow” of its former self.<sup>51</sup> Brown highlights the ways in which state and local authorities, influenced by the cult of efficiency as well as other social and economic forces, pressured the Massachusetts normal schools into simplifying their curricula—normal schools were expected to reject nineteenth-century ideals and theories and to become vocationally-minded institutions drilling future elementary school teachers in the practical methodologies that they would need in order to run a classroom.

A close study of course catalogues, student records, and other official documents leads me to agree with Westfield historians that the early twentieth-century was marked by “losses” at the Westfield normal school, particularly in the area of rhetorical instruction. Westfield’s early-twentieth-century students and their teachers, especially those responsible for rhetorical instruction, were subject to more limiting conceptions of the primary school teacher’s role in the classroom, the type of education that should be offered women preparing for such a career, and of the role that the normal school should play in offering that education. And yet other archival materials show that Westfield’s teachers of rhetoric and composition, along with the student body, resisted those limiting conceptions. Course descriptions, student notebooks, and yearbooks suggest that teachers and students drew on the school’s rich intellectual traditions and on new and more progressive educational theories to create a teacher training program offering more complex rhetorical knowledge.

Mariolina Salvatori’s work reminds readers that a number of turn-of-the-century normal school leaders from across the country expressed complex ideals similar to those of progressive normal school founders.<sup>52</sup> For instance, in 1891, Thomas S. Gray, president of the St. Cloud Normal School and chair of the NEA’s 1889 Committee on Normal Schools, asserted that the best normal school would be a “school of philosophy...making teachers out of scholars.” Its prime purpose was to work out a “stupendous problem”: “How does the mind work.”<sup>53</sup> His views were shared by members of the NEA’s 1895 Committee on Normal Schools who wrote that their institutions must train teachers for a “great field of labor”—that they must cultivate “a loftier conception of what the American teacher must become to fill the place of destiny conferred by democracy and Christianity.”<sup>54</sup> For leaders like Thomas Gray and Alfred Boyden, principal of the Bridgewater State Normal School and a member of the 1895 Committee on Normal Schools, a well-prepared teacher would have an education in which theory and practice were “conjoined.”<sup>55</sup>

Yet other educators, such as Frank Hill and David Snedden, who ran the Massachusetts Board of Education for much of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, argued that normal schools should adopt a more pragmatic mission, focusing strictly on “professional work” instead of pursuing the “advanced” study in the liberal arts that had come to guide places like Westfield during the nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup> They shared the common belief that normal school students were “persons of indifferent intellectual acquirements” who needed training more suited to their academic deficiencies.<sup>57</sup>

Fed by the larger number of women choosing careers over marriage, continued cultural anxiety over whether women were biologically or intellectually equipped for a complex academic education certainly lurked behind the labels assigned to normal school students.<sup>58</sup> Nineteenth-century educational theories on teaching, like those inspired by Pestalozzi, were also under attack. Educators worried that the interactive, child-centered approaches of women teachers were emasculating male pupils, particularly those at the middle or secondary levels.<sup>59</sup> Certainly, more progressive philosophies, like those of John Dewey, Stanley Hall, and William James, were beginning to influence the work of some normal school leaders and teachers, but the leaders of the Massachusetts Board of Education did not share these pedagogical perspectives. The Board's vision of the field of education was the one so well documented by Mariolina Salvitori: Members of departments of education at major public and private universities (mostly men) would take responsibility for developing and teaching scientifically proven educational theories to future scholars and administrators (also largely men), while the normal schools would provide primary school teachers (mostly women) with the formulas and methods needed to run a classroom full of children.<sup>60</sup>

Pressure to modify the curriculum was felt intensely at Westfield, particularly by Clarence Brodeur, who became principal in 1904. In a letter to the Board, he expressed enthusiasm for "the vocational trend" in education, asserting that "the element of utilitarian instruction has increased the efficiency of our teaching at Westfield" and stripping down the curriculum to train teachers in the basics.<sup>61</sup> Possibly galvanized by Harvard's 1897 "Report of the Committee on Composition," which faulted normal schools for having an "unduly low" "standard" in matters of correct English,<sup>62</sup> Brodeur assured the board that Westfield would place at the center of its rhetorical curriculum "correct speaking and writing" and the best means to communicate these "habits" to children.

While Brodeur was indeed a force with which to be reckoned, those faculty members responsible for rhetorical instruction at Westfield did not entirely adopt the utilitarian perspective of their administrator. The curriculum they developed calls into question Robert Connors' report that by the early twentieth century, classical principles and civic development were no longer clear goals of rhetorical instruction. Their careers also challenge the notion that responsibility for rhetorical instruction rested largely with graduate students of literature, usually women.

It is important to note that Westfield's early-twentieth-century English teachers shared their principal's concern with "correct speaking and writing." And yet their stories are more complicated. According to Connors, many

college teachers of the day, ill-prepared to teach writing, relied heavily on textbooks and made correction an “uppermost” goal of instruction. The demands of “theme correcting drove the more thoughtful scholars away” and turned teachers into “drudges.”<sup>63</sup> But Westfield’s instructors do not fit this profile. They received their training at nineteenth-century teacher institutes and normal schools, and not in university literature departments. Furthermore, they occupied positions of some importance, even power, at Westfield; and the curriculum they developed continued to stress the importance of future teachers studying rhetoric and composition as a means to develop powerful personae and voices.

Evaluations that Westfield instructors completed while observing teacher candidates engaged in practice teaching were, indeed, critical of those who had “poor English.” But instructors also praised teacher candidates when their discourse exhibited “force,” “fluency,” “presence,” “earnestness,” “sympathy,” and “ingenuity.”<sup>64</sup> It was these traits that enabled the teacher to “win” the cooperation of a class, mold the characters of children, and foster their learning, particularly in the language-arts. The instructors also shared their predecessors’ disdain for a dependence on textbooks. Furthermore, they



The building on Court Street that housed the Westfield State Normal School from 1892–1956. It now serves as Westfield’s City Hall. In 1932, the institution was renamed the State Teachers College at Westfield. Until 1962, the only degree granted was in education.

saw themselves as preparing teachers not just to have an influence in the classroom, but also in professional societies and civic organizations.

Adeline Knight's teaching career at Westfield serves as an excellent case in point. A graduate of the Maplewood Institute and former high school teacher, Knight came to Westfield in the mid 1890s, helping to shape the rhetorical program of study that existed at the time of Brodeur's arrival. Unlike her predecessors, Knight left the direct study of the mind and its faculties to her colleagues teaching educational psychology. Under her, the course in rhetoric disappeared from the curriculum, replaced by a combined course in rhetoric and composition that focused on the modes of discourse: "Description, narration, exposition, and argument, with the qualities of style appropriate to each, are taught."<sup>65</sup> Students learned about the "correct order" in which to say things as well as "what not to say."<sup>66</sup>

Yet an essay she wrote for the journal *Education* earlier in her career suggests that she was not merely concerned with producing teachers who could model for their students a body of correct forms in spoken and written English. She shared her predecessors' belief that rhetorical instruction should enhance a teacher's ability to communicate extemporaneously with his or her students—that rhetorical instruction should prepare teachers to develop their pupils' processes of communication. Knight wrote, for instance, that a "real teacher" "set[s] thought and fancy flashing between soul and soul." Knight also mistrusted textbooks, criticizing the primary school teacher who "makes no practical application of facts, and merely teaches textbooks thoroughly. Concerning political questions, foreign news, the work of the world, she knows nothing...Neither teacher nor taught can be called literate. The teacher has absolutely no resources beyond 'the English branches.'" And like those who came before her, Knight's approaches to teaching emphasized "self-activity."<sup>67</sup> Her courses in rhetoric and composition, as well as those in literature and grammar, used the "laboratory method," where students received "daily practice in writing" and one-on-one critique from the teacher. By encouraging them to offer one another critique, she also "trained [them] to intelligent criticism of language work."<sup>68</sup> In other words, by using the laboratory method in her own teaching, Knight was consciously modeling an approach she believed her students should take when engaged in "language work" with their own future pupils.

A contemporary of Knight's, Laura Knotts of the Lowell State Normal School, argued that normal school instruction in English enhanced students' teaching power by "broaden[ing] the mental horizon" and "quicken[ing] the thought." For Knight, self activity did precisely that—it not only improved future teachers' ability to use correct written and spoken forms, it increased



their thinking powers, which led to increased confidence, or force, and an ability to guide children spontaneously in their own language development. Knight's pedagogical perspective was consistent with that of the rising educational theorists of her day, such as John Dewey, who saw "the language instinct" as the "greatest of all educational resources," and who argued that to foster learning, primary school teachers had to be able to use their own discourse to create an atmosphere friendly to "the full and free use of language."<sup>69</sup>

The pedagogical context in which she worked may be one reason why Knight's conception of the composing process was actually more organic than mechanistic, placing her in a camp alongside more progressive composition theorists like Fred Scott and Gertrude Buck. Her course descriptions emphasized, for example, that the composition was "a living product of an active mind; therefore, there is constant and careful study of the way in which paragraphs grow." Notes taken by Elizabeth Rowell, who took Knight's course in 1906, provide further evidence that Knight linked the composing process to the development of thought. Knight emphasized the importance of "original composition" and conceived of the process of coming up with that composition as not necessarily linear or formulaic. For instance, Knight suggested that as they reflected on their subject, students "jot down" their thoughts, "even though they seem unimportant, for one thought suggests another." She reminded students that in coming up with material to write about, reading widely would be of value. As they read, she remarked, students should take careful notes on what the material said. But those notes, she asserted, should also include "conclusions and impressions of your own made as you read. These will be very valuable when you expand [your] outline into a theme."<sup>70</sup>

Like her predecessor Dickinson, Knight also frequently linked her lessons in composition directly to the work her students would eventually do teaching writing in the classroom. Rowell's notes show Knight discussing the ways in which these future teachers might facilitate their pupils' language and, hence, thinking abilities. She suggested that future teachers guide primary school pupils as they use writing to "retell, condense, and expand" the stories they heard and read about in varied sources. Expanding, for Knight, was the most profitable activity, as it was "a long step toward original composition...the writer has an opportunity to develop an idea in an original way. It is as if an artist should take another's pencil sketch and fill in the lights and shadows according to his own ideas." Knight's emphasis was not on producing teachers obsessed with mechanical correctness, but suggested instead the view of another contemporary, Laura Dunbar Hagarty,

for whom an “overanxious pruning knife” applied to a child’s written or oral expression interfered with “naturalness and vividness,” and thus stifled the child’s intellectual development.<sup>71</sup>

Also important to note is that the themes Knight’s students wrote differed from those often decontextualized essays produced in college composition courses of the day. They wrote essays for composition class, but in conjunction with other courses as well. They also contributed writings, at least for a time, to a school periodical, *The Normal Exponent*. As in the nineteenth-century, normal school students wrote within a set context, using themes to advance their professional knowledge—to explore or argue for the effectiveness of a particular teaching approach (e.g., the Sloyd Method), or to understand the way theories of education had changed and evolved over the previous century; and they continued to write theses, at least until the time of Brodeur’s arrival.

Having had her curriculum in place for nearly ten years, Knight was a well-established instructor at Westfield at the time Brodeur arrived. Still, it is possible that in promoting the Board’s new agenda, Brodeur pressured Knight to alter the emphasis of her teaching. In 1910, the catalogue description of the composition course changed dramatically, placing primary emphasis upon “examination of the common mistakes in oral and written speech” and “correct usage in social forms.” This course description was likely written by Brodeur to satisfy state demands; he may also have taught the course on a few occasions. However, it seems unlikely that Knight would have changed her own actual approaches to teaching so dramatically at such a late point in her career. And this description remained on the books for only three years, replaced once again in 1914 with courses emphasizing more complex rhetorical goals.<sup>72</sup>

After Brodeur arrived, students engaged less frequently in oral public address. For example, students no longer presented their essays at graduations, which Brodeur transformed into short church services.<sup>73</sup> Also important to note is that it seems likely that Knight did not emphasize oratory in the way her predecessors had. Knight did, however, believe that effective oral expression, marked in her words by “exactness, force, and fluency,” was essential to teaching power.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, she frequently required her students to present orally before one another, both in her composition and her literature courses. With the advice of such teachers as Knight, students also channeled their rhetorical energies into theatrical productions, some of which were written by the students themselves.<sup>75</sup> Finally, it is important to note that during Knight’s tenure, Westfield continued to provide normal school students with meaningful rhetorical models, inviting several prominent female reformers and suffragettes to give addresses at the school.<sup>76</sup>



### DELTA OMICRON ALPHA

THE Delta Omicron Alpha, composed of Seniors and Freshmen chosen for their ability in dramatics or debating, was reorganized in the fall under the direction of its faculty adviser, Miss Pratt.

This year, 1928-1929, as last year, the club was divided into two sections, the dramatic and the debating. Many delightful readings, plays, and debates were given at the meetings throughout the year.

The Delta Omicron Alpha presented plays at the various parties held in the school. At the Halloween party a fantastic short play, "When Witches Ride", was given. "When Mimi Lights Her Candle" delighted the audience at the Christmas party.

Through the efforts of the following officers, the club functioned very successfully: president, Mary Kavanagh '29; vice-president, Helen Labrovitz '31; secretary, Ariel Saunders '31; treasurer, Margaret Walsh '29; chairman of program committee, debating, Charlotte Menzel '29; chairman of program committee, dramatic, Mary Walsh '29 (first half of year), Alice Flavin '29 (second half.)

Westfield's joint Debate and Drama Society, photographed for the 1929 college yearbook, *The Tekoa*.

The profile of Westfield instructor Raymond G. Patterson, who came to Westfield in 1919, and the curriculum he developed, also differed markedly from that of the exploited instructor teaching freshman composition at the elite college down the road.<sup>77</sup> The training he received at a nineteenth-century normal school most likely shaped his greater commitment to training teachers, in the words of the 1899 Committee on Normal Schools, not just to “write and speak,” but to feel “at home...on the platform.”<sup>78</sup> Patterson was probably even more under the influence of progressive educational theorists like John Dewey, whose belief that language learning must be “close to the life of most students” had taken hold in the primary schools of the 1920s.<sup>79</sup>

At Westfield, Patterson taught history, civics, and composition. Like Knight’s courses, his composition course was student centered, providing “useful” instruction in both oral and written discourse. He set out to train students “to use and to teach the forms of composition most essential to the active men or women of the modern world.” For students, this meant “the development and organization of material into such forms as are certain to be demanded of a teacher in the life of any community: club papers, talks, book reviews, reports, stories, debates, descriptions, expository themes.” Also provided were “abundant opportunity for practice in spoken and written English in correlation with history, civics, current events, and in daily student activities.”<sup>80</sup>

These varied activities might explain why Patterson’s students exhibited a “zest for rhetorical encounters” not unlike that of Westfield women of the 1880s.<sup>81</sup> For example, in conjunction with his courses, 1923 students organized “The Seven Joint Debates” described at the opening of this essay, beginning with a reenactment of the Lincoln and Douglas debates, with participants enthusiastically donning the language, demeanor, and clothing of these famous politicians. This colorful historical moment arguably provides us with a glimpse of female students and their instructors resisting limitations imposed on their rhetorical education by the institution and the state. In physically cloaking themselves in the characters of two famous male politicians of the previous century, these players strained creatively against the hidden and overt expectations that had constrained the education of teachers, and women, at various times in the school’s history—claiming the public platform (and perhaps also mocking it) for their own use. In the words of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, these women embodied an “innovative assertion of authority” over their own identities as women and teachers.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, their reenactment was one in a series of debates that generated original oral disputation on subjects such as immigration, education, and temperance.

Inspired by these performances and encouraged by their faculty, Westfield's female students went on to form a joint debating and drama society in the mid 1920s. They named this society Delta Omicron Alpha, or the Daughters of Athena. As in the nineteenth-century literary society, members of the 1920s and 30s organized formal oral debates, facilitated school-wide discussions, called "forums," and wrote and produced dramas on social and educational issues. Debaters also served as representatives for the Massachusetts Normal School Debating Council and competed against other Massachusetts normal schools in two "triangular debates."<sup>83</sup>

This study of Westfield's early-twentieth-century curriculum leads me to conclude, then, that institutional forces, gender ideology, and certain educational philosophies led faculty to place more emphasis on the normal school student's future role as an "efficient, methodical, and professional educator."<sup>84</sup> These teachers needed to be able to employ correct written and spoken English, but also to pass those habits on to children. However, Westfield's instructors also continued to represent the study of oral and written expression in more complex terms, as an exploration of the processes of communication. They also exposed students to a wider array of discourse practices, including oral and written argument, than state and school officials demanded. They justified their curriculum, as their predecessors in the century before had, by emphasizing the role rhetorical education played in producing "teaching power."

Although a claim worthy of more consideration, I would argue that the institution's continued faith in the connection between teaching and rhetorical power led Westfield to develop a more rigorous rhetorical curriculum than other schools of its day—a curriculum that more effectively represented written and oral expression as complicated acts of communication with larger social implications. The extent to which graduates of Westfield applied what they learned to their own teaching invites, of course, further exploration. Also worthy of examination are the varied ways in which programs of rhetorical study at other normal schools evolved in the twentieth-century. Comparative studies of normal schools may provide further evidence that more complex understandings of rhetoric and composition instruction were kept alive in the early twentieth-century not just by the primary and secondary schools, as James Berlin notes, but also by normal schools.<sup>85</sup>



## CONCLUSION

In *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866–1910* Nan Johnson exposes the various cultural and social forces that wiped women orators off the “rhetorical/oratorical” map. She also asserts that in disregarding women orators, scholars have

forgotten. . . the insight into the range of nineteenth-century rhetorical practices. . . : the vitality and cultural influence of oratory over nineteenth-century American life was found as often in the church meeting room, the convention hall, the town square, the community gathering, and the dining hall as it was in the Senate chambers, the law court, and the political-debating platform. When early canon authors chose to privilege only the rhetorical spaces controlled by statesmen, they erased not only the voices of women who helped to shape American political culture, but also the significance of the rhetorical spaces in which most Americans heard words that changed their views and lives.

To that list of rhetorical spaces erased I would add the primary school classroom, along with the classrooms of institutions, like the Westfield State Normal School, that prepared primary school teachers. Such an erasure fails to allow for the fact that teaching, in the words of Geraldine Joncich Clifford, “is a powerful molder of human beings”—an act of suasion by which social as well as personal identities are constructed.<sup>86</sup>

Rather than label the normal school, and the rhetorical work its nineteenth- and twentieth-century faculty and students did, as lacking in innovation, this study asserts that in linking rhetorical power to effective teaching, Westfield’s rhetorical curriculum offered its female students access to rhetorical knowledge often denied to them at other institutions of higher education. It lends further support to Kathryn Fitzgerald’s argument that nineteenth-century normal school faculty, and the rhetorical programs of study they developed, were shaped by their schools’ unique institutional circumstances as professional training grounds for teachers, and by the progressive educational theories those grounds fostered.<sup>87</sup> It extends that argument, furthermore, by revealing the ways in which its particular institutional circumstances, along with a new generation of progressive educational theories, enabled Westfield State Normal School’s early twentieth-century faculty to resist institutional and disciplinary attempts to redefine rhetorical education in mechanistic terms.

My own position as a faculty member at the small teaching-focused institution that replaced the Westfield State Normal School has certainly inclined me to read the school's history in a more positive light. My institutional commitments also lead me to assert the importance of looking not just for those stories that our scholarly narratives erase, but also those that are consciously and unconsciously erased through the construction of an archive. Central to my work have been the varied scraps of paper—the letters, graduation programs, student writings—hidden in the backs of file cabinets.

Deep excavation shows that for almost one hundred years, Westfield supported a curriculum offering female students access to a richer understanding of rhetorical theory and practice than other, more elite institutions of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. While along the way Westfield may have produced “well-read women of good taste” who used their education to make inroads into a number of fields, it also armed teachers with a special rhetorical training aimed at empowering them to communicate meaningfully with those they taught.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *The Tekoa*, Westfield State Normal School Yearbook, 1919–1929, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State University, 70.

<sup>2</sup> John C. Brererton, Introduction, in John C. Brererton, ed. *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College: A Documentary History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 20.

<sup>3</sup> What would become the Westfield State Normal School was established in Barre, Massachusetts in 1839 under the direction of professor of rhetoric Samuel P. Newman. Led by Cyrus Peirce, the Lexington State Normal School had opened a few months earlier. In 1842, Newman died suddenly, and the Barre school closed for two years, reopening in 1844 in Westfield, Massachusetts (in the western part of the state). Between 1839 and 1842, the school enrolled 165 students, 75 of whom were men. For details see Robert T. Brown, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Colleges: The Westfield Normal School, 1839–1914*. In 1844, 43 women and 28 men enrolled at Westfield. For more information on this era see *Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts* (1844–1931), Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State College University. Percentages calculated from numbers provided

by Robert T. Brown, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Colleges: The Westfield Normal School, 1839-1914* (Westfield, MA: Institute for Massachusetts Studies, 1988), pp. 127-28. Percentages calculated from numbers provided by Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1980), Table A7.12

<sup>4</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Consciousness Raising: Linking Theory, Criticism, and Practice," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32.1 (Winter 2002), 59.

<sup>5</sup> Frances Allen (1854-1941) and Mary Allen (1858-1941).

<sup>6</sup> Suzanne L. Flynt, *The Allen Sisters: Pictorial Photographers, 1885-1920* (Deerfield, Ma.: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Flynt, *The Allen Sisters: Pictorial Photographers, 1885-1920*, 19-21.

<sup>8</sup> So long as students declared their intention to teach in the state of Massachusetts after graduation, Westfield required that they pay only for their room and board (*Catalogue*). Neighboring Mt. Holyoke charged around \$60.00 a semester in its early years. For more see Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States* Vol. 1 (New York: Octagon, 1966). Most nineteenth-century students identified their parents as farmers or laborers. Frances Allen (but not Mary) received state financial aid during her stay at Westfield.

<sup>9</sup> Brown, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Colleges: The Westfield Normal School, 1839-1914*. See also Jurgen Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Flynt, *The Allen Sisters: Pictorial Photographers, 1885-1920*, 20. For more information see Glenna Matthews, *The Rise of Public Woman Woman's Power and Woman's Place in the United States 1630-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). While the primary focus of this essay is the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a brief overview of Westfield's early program of study is essential to a fuller understanding of the forces that helped shape its curriculum and extracurriculum at Westfield.

<sup>11</sup> Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture*, 12-31, 135.

<sup>12</sup> See also Frances B. Cogan, *All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

<sup>13</sup> *Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts, 1875*.

<sup>14</sup> John C. Brererton, Introduction, in John C. Brererton, ed. *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College: A Documentary History*, 9. More specifically, the Allen sisters took one year of Grammar and Analysis of the English Language (4 hours per week), one half year of English Literature (4 hours per week), and one half year of Rhetoric (4 hours per week).

<sup>15</sup> Caleb Atwater, "Extract from *Essay on Education* (1841)," in Mariolina Rizzi Salvatori, ed. *Pedagogy: Disturbing History, 1819-1929* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 118.

<sup>16</sup> A Congregational minister and former principal of the Westfield Academy, where Emma Willard taught for a time, Emerson Davis (1798–1896) was principal from 1844–1846. David Rowe, a former pupil of Newman’s, followed him, serving from 1846–1854. William Wells, a philologist, served from 1854–1856 at which time John W. Dickinson became principal, serving until 1877.

<sup>17</sup> Leaders could have created separate female and male tracks as some private seminaries, such as the New Hampton Literary Institution, had done, but financial constraints most likely discouraged founders from considering such an option. More important, however, is the fact that other Massachusetts State Normal Schools that served only women, such as the one in Lexington (later Framingham), adopted a similar curriculum to the one at Westfield. For more, see Beth Ann Rothermel, “A Sphere of Noble Action: Gender, Rhetoric, and Influence at a Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts State Normal School,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 33.1 (Winter 2003): 35–64.

<sup>18</sup> Atwater, “Extract from *Essay on Education* (1841),” 118.

<sup>19</sup> Julia R. Graves, Notebook, 1855–1856, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State University Library. These remarks come from a lecture given by Principal Emerson on a return visit to Westfield in 1855, several years after he retired. The lecture was recorded by student Julia Graves.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, *The Rise and Fall of the People’s Colleges: The Westfield Normal School, 1839–191*, 48. Dickinson (1825–1901) studied at Williams College with philosopher Mark Hopkins. In 1877, he became secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education. After retiring from the board, he joined his daughter, Suzie Allen Dickinson, on the faculty at the Emerson College of Oratory. In addition to publishing *The Limits of Oral Training* and *Rhetoric and Principles of Written Composition*, Dickinson also wrote *Our Republic* (1888) and *Principles and Methods of Teaching, Derived from Knowledge of the Mind* (1899).

<sup>21</sup> *Western Hamden Times*, 24 January 1877.

<sup>22</sup> Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827) was a Swiss educational reformer whose work was especially influential in northern Europe.

<sup>23</sup> Lucille Schultz, *The Young Composers: Composition’s Beginnings in Nineteenth-Century Schools* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 75.

<sup>24</sup> John W. Dickinson, *The Limits of Oral Training* (Syracuse: 1890), 24, 13.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Arms, Notebook, 1858, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State College University.

<sup>26</sup> No model or training school was available from 1855–1892, so students were required to practice teach for one another. They did have opportunities to observe real classes, however, and many students taught during their summer breaks.

<sup>27</sup> Rothermel, “A Sphere of Noble Action: Gender, Rhetoric, and Influence at a Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts State Normal School.” Dickinson even encouraged female students to engage in the society’s biweekly debates. They mostly refused to participate, although they did contribute to society discussions and applied

what they were learning about argument to pieces they wrote for the society's literary magazine.

<sup>28</sup> Salvatori, ed. *Pedagogy: Disturbing History, 1819–1929*, 62.

<sup>29</sup> Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture*; also Brown, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Colleges: The Westfield Normal School, 1839–1914*.

<sup>30</sup> Brereton, Introduction, in John C. Brereton, ed. *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875–1925*, 7, 17; Robert Connors, *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988), 148.

<sup>31</sup> Brown, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Colleges: The Westfield Normal School, 1839–1914*, 116. By 1900, over fifty percent of those children attending public schools in Massachusetts were immigrants or the children of immigrants.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Colleges: The Westfield Normal School, 1839–1914*; also Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture*.

<sup>33</sup> *Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts*, 1880.

<sup>34</sup> *Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts*, 1880–1897.

<sup>35</sup> Cogan, *All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*, 239.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabethada A. Wright and S. Michael Halloran, "From Rhetoric to Composition: The Teaching of Writing in America to 1900" in James J. Murphy, ed. *A Short History of Writing Instruction, from Ancient Greece to Modern America*, 2nd ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hermagoras Press, 2001), 213–246.

<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the notion that women teachers achieved their rhetorical power in the classroom not through inspired oratory, but rather through their ability to nurture their students, likely led many to see the study of oratory and debate as impractical. See Beth Ann Rothermel, "A Sphere of Noble Action: Gender, Rhetoric, and Influence at a Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts State Normal School."

<sup>38</sup> Herbert Sedgwick, Record of the Class of 1886, Typescript prepared for the class semi-Centennial, 1926, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State University Library, 7a.

<sup>39</sup> Elvira Carver, *How to Teach Geography: A Plan for an Elementary and a Scientific Course* (Boston, 1887), 9.

<sup>40</sup> Also noteworthy is Laura C. Harding, who graduated from Westfield in 1869 and taught composition and other subjects on the faculty from 1872–1896. After Harding left Westfield, she completed a graduate degree at the University of Grenoble and then started her own school in Denver, Colorado.

<sup>41</sup> In their civics classes students were expected to engage in mock town hall and school committee debates. See "Civil Polity" *Topics of the Course of Studies in the State Normal School, Westfield, MA.*, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State University Library.

<sup>42</sup> In the 1860s and 1870s female members of the school's literary society had largely confined their arguments to their written compositions and informal oral discussions.

<sup>43</sup> Normal Philologian Society, Records, 1872–1884, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State University Library, Nov. 4, 1883.

<sup>44</sup> Normal Philologian Society, Records, 1872–1884, June 18, 1884, and June 11, 1883.

<sup>45</sup> Theses were extended themes or compositions.

<sup>46</sup> *Westfield Times and News-Letter*, 22 June 1887.

<sup>47</sup> Mary Lyons founded Mount Holyoke; Anne Judson served as a missionary; Anna Dickinson was a suffragette and social reformer; Jenny Lind was an opera singer; and Sarah Bernhardt was an actress.

<sup>48</sup> The *General Catalogue*, an 1889 record of what nineteenth-century graduates had done after leaving Westfield, lists a number of female graduates from the 1870s and 80s who were members of temperance organizations.

<sup>49</sup> *General Catalogue of the State Normal School, Westfield, Mass., 1839–1889* (Boston: 1890). Eldorah Eldridge (grad. 1871) became a normal school instructor in Whitewater, Wisconsin; and Helen Cleveland (grad. 1875) took a similar position at Platteville, Wisconsin, two schools Kathryn Fitzgerald has discussed. Ada Warner (grad. 1871) became a normal school instructor at St. Cloud. Clara Price (grad. 1878) and Caroline Knowles (grad. 1882) taught at the Hampton Institute, while Elizabeth Brewer (grad. 1863) taught at Vassar. A few, including Julia E. Smith (grad. 1875 from Westfield, and 1889 from Howard University), became medical doctors. Charlotte Drinkwater (grad. 1862) served as General Superintendent for the Cambridge YWCA and then founded a school for economically underprivileged boys; Henrietta Smith (grad. 1871) wrote for publication; Fannie Rogers (grad. 1867) became a suffragette; and Minnie Russell (grad. 1878) became a missionary to India and Assam.

<sup>50</sup> Kate Upson Clark, who graduated in 1872 and became a successful writer and editor, addressed the college during its fiftieth anniversary in 1889. See Rothermel, "A Sphere of Noble Action: Gender, Rhetoric, and Influence at a Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts State Normal School," 35.

<sup>51</sup> Brown, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Colleges: The Westfield Normal School*, 120.

<sup>52</sup> Salvatori, ed. *Pedagogy: Disturbing History, 1819–1929*, 169.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Gray, "The Normal-School Idea as Embodied in the Normal School at St. Cloud." In Salvatori, ed. *Pedagogy: Disturbing History, 1819–1929*, 206, 201.

<sup>54</sup> National Education Association, "Report of Committee on Normal Schools," (University of Chicago Press: July 1899), 29.

<sup>55</sup> Albert Boyden was principal of The Bridgewater State Normal School from 1860–1906.

<sup>56</sup> Brown, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Colleges: The Westfield Normal School, 1839–1914*; also Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture*. Discouraged by the movement for more social efficiency



characterizing educational debates at the end of the century, Dickinson resigned as Secretary of the Board in 1893. Ironically, he taught in California for a time, inspiring Snedden to become a teacher. See Brown 93.

<sup>57</sup> J.P. Gordy, *Rise and Growth of the Normal-School Idea in the United States* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1891), 129.

<sup>58</sup> Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, Vol. 1, 204–205. For such an indictment see Elizabeth Maury “Education of Woman,” *Education*, 8 (December 1887), 236. Woody also cites a number of educators from the 1880s and 90s who were debating the need for more utility in women's education (194–197).

<sup>59</sup> Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, 508.

<sup>60</sup> Hill's main interest as secretary of the Board of Education was “the high school movement and the college-led accreditation movement.” See Brown, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Colleges: The Westfield Normal School, 1839–1914*, 97.

<sup>61</sup> See Clarence Brodeur, Letter to David Snedden, 1911, Clarence Brodeur Letter Books, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State University Library. Brodeur (1865–1923) was a graduate of Harvard and Boston Law School. He served as superintendent of schools in Chicopee, Massachusetts, before being hired at Westfield. Brodeur remained principal until 1923.

<sup>62</sup> Charles Francis Adams, et al., “Report of the Committee on Composition and Rhetoric (1897),” in Salvatori, ed. *Pedagogy: Disturbing History, 1819–1929*, 106. The writers of the report demanded that normal school graduates “give evidence of severe mechanical and elementary drill received in the normal school.”

<sup>63</sup> Robert Connors, *Composition–Rhetoric*, 181, 151.

<sup>64</sup> Student Records, 1904–1919, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State University Library.

<sup>65</sup> *Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts*, 1897.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 1903.

<sup>67</sup> Adeline Knight, “Spots of Weakness in Training,” *Education* 10 (Sept 1889): 13, 16, 67.

<sup>68</sup> *Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts*, 1903.

<sup>69</sup> Laura Knotts, “Normal School English, As Based upon the Work in the State Normal School at Lowell, Mass.,” *Paris Exposition of 1900: The Public Schools of Massachusetts, U.S.A., Eight Educational Monographs* (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1900); Knight, “Spots of Weakness in Training,” 4, 43; John Dewey, *The School and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 43.

<sup>70</sup> *Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts*, 1903; Elizabeth Rowell, Notebook, 1906–1907, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State University Library.

<sup>71</sup> Knight, “Spots of Weakness in Training,” 17; Rowell, Notebook; Laura Dunbar Hagarty, “English,” *The Normal Instructor*, June 1910. Hagarty was a teacher of language and the history of education at the Buffalo Training School for Teachers.

<sup>72</sup> The catalogue of 1914 states that entering students were to take a one-year course in “Oral and Written Expression.” This course provided “reviews of language

and composition work to insure in the minds of the students the knowledge necessary for the skilled guidance of children in oral and written English” as well as “practice in oral expression” and a “review of the essentials of grammar, not for the sake of the science, but as an aid in the formation of correct habits of speech.” This course was followed by semester-long courses in composition and literature. The composition course included “practice in oral and written expression as well as instruction in methods of teaching...nearly half of the time of the course is devoted to oral work, the aim being to secure exactness, force, and fluency” (*Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts*, 1914). All three courses remained a part of the curriculum throughout the 1920s, although descriptions change depending upon who was teaching the course. Penmanship and reading instruction were also required during this period, as was the course Reading and Story Telling in the late 1920s.

<sup>73</sup> Graduation Programs File Folder, 1855–1920, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State University Library.

<sup>74</sup> *Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts*, 1914.

<sup>75</sup> Graduation Programs File Folder, 1855–1920, Raymond G. Patterson Alumni Archive, Westfield State University Library.

<sup>76</sup> Suffragists Helen Loring Grenfell (1911) and Maud Wood Park (1914) gave addresses, as did a number of other female educators and social reformers (*Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts*, 1900–1915).

<sup>77</sup> Patterson was educated at a Pennsylvania normal school and at Syracuse University. The Westfield Archives were named for him, as his initial donation helped establish them. Other English instructors of the late teens and twenties were Mary Grace Fickett, Alice M. Winslow, Emma Ramsey, Edith Dobie, and Alice Prescott Fay. Less information is available, but course descriptions and other archival materials suggest that they had similar philosophies to Knight and Patterson.

<sup>78</sup> National Education Association, “Report of Committee on Normal Schools,” 30.

<sup>79</sup> Arthur N. Applebee, *Tradition and Reform in the Teaching of English: A History* (Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1974), 48.

<sup>80</sup> *Catalogue of the State Normal School at Westfield Massachusetts*, 1920–1921, 1925.

<sup>81</sup> S. Michael Halloran, “Rhetoric in the American College Curriculum: The Decline of Public Discourse,” *Pre/Text* 3.3 (Fall 1982): 254.

<sup>82</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “Consciousness Raising: Linking Theory, Criticism, and Practice,” 57.

<sup>83</sup> In 1929, Fitchburg, Bridgewater, and Westfield came up against each other in a triangular debate on the issue of “Equal Pay for Equal Work” (Westfield was the overall winner). In 1930 the three schools debated whether capital punishment should be abolished. Westfield’s affirmative team was defeated in Bridgewater, but its negative team won in Fitchburg. See *The Tekoa*, Westfield State Normal School Yearbook, 1931.

<sup>84</sup> In the 1930s, male students began attending Westfield again. The school also implemented a four year degree program and became the Westfield State Teacher's College.

<sup>85</sup> James Berlin, *Writing Instruction in the Nineteenth-Century American Colleges* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 84.

<sup>86</sup> Nan Johnson, *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866–1910, (Studies in Rhetorics and Feminisms)* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002).

<sup>87</sup> Kathryn Fitzgerald, "A Rediscovered Tradition: European Pedagogy and Composition in Nineteenth-Century Midwestern Normal Schools," *CCC* 53.2 (Dec 2001): 224–250.

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