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ADULT EDUCATION FOR FOREIGN-BORN AND NATIVE ILLITERATES

By

CHARLES M. HERLIHY
STATE SUPERVISOR OF ADULT ALIEN EDUCATION FOR MASSACHUSETTS

[Advance Sheets from the Biennial Survey of Education in the United States, 1922-1924]

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ADULT EDUCATION FOR FOREIGN-BORN AND NATIVE ILLITERATES

By Charles M. Herlihy
State Supervisor of Adult Alien Education for Massachusetts


AMERICANISM AND AMERICANIZATION

Americanism embraces the ideals of the good citizen in political, social, economic, and cultural relationships. The definition and interpretation of these ideals determine the scope of one’s understanding of the movement of Americanization; that is, those programs and activities that aim to promote Americanism.

It is commonly understood that Americanization work is restricted to education and social service for the foreign born. The school programs of English and citizenship for adult aliens are generally termed Americanization. The school supervisors and teachers in this new type of work, however, are the first to deny that the foreign born are the only group that need instruction and help in learning the principles and ideals that govern the conduct of the good citizen. Moreover, the experienced worker with the foreign born realizes that we can not Americanize immigrants until our native born practice in their daily lives those principles which are commonly understood to be the distinguishing marks of citizenship in the United States. Granting the aim of this work to be the promoting of better citizenship, then the correction of every un-American condition may properly be termed “Americanization work.”

Consider our outstanding social problems in America today. Ignorance based on illiteracy, due in turn to inadequate school support, racial and religious prejudices and intolerance, poverty, dependency, and all types of social inadequacies are certainly not limited to immigrants. And the correction of these conditions is very definitely a part of our national Americanization problem.

In our political life we have the discomforting situation illustrated in the national election of 1924, when 30,000,000 citizens failed to vote. The percentage of nonvoters in the native-born group was larger in several sections of the country than that of the naturalized
citizens. This neglect of the highest privilege of citizenship by 50 per cent of the eligible voters is a most serious phase of our Americanization problem.

The flood of trashy novels, magazines, motion pictures, and plays that is poured out annually to satisfy the low standards of the American public to-day deserves much more attention from parents, educators, and clergymen than is apparently given. Raising the general level of appreciation is obviously a part of our national problem of bettering citizenship.

The term "Americanization" is in disrepute among a large number of the intelligent leaders of the foreign groups in this country. This is due very largely to the utterances of those Americans who believe that the immigrant must conform absolutely to certain fixed standards of thinking and acting in the United States. Despite the fact that there is no agreement and obviously never will be any agreement as to the definition of these standards, it would be absurd for America to scrap the magnificent contributions which her immigrants have brought not only to our industrial and agricultural productivity, but more important still, to the spiritual and cultural life of America. As a Jewish mother in an English class in Chicago well said:

Some of the things taught me in the Old World which I want my children to preserve are respect for parents, the teacher, and old age. The tradition for thoroughness and honesty of purpose is also one that the people of the New World I would do well to follow. The race for success may result in subordinating religion, high moral standards, and the fine arts, and in considering material gain as the height of achievement.

Are not the standards of conduct and the appreciation of the noble things of life as expressed by this immigrant mother valuable contributions to America?

John Daniels, in America Via the Neighborhood, states that Americanization does not mean rigid conformity or injection, but does involve the intelligent participation of native and foreign born in America's upbuilding.

The aim of any sound Americanization program is to promote an intelligent, loyal, united citizenry. The millions of immigrants who have come to America in the past, and those who will continue to come voluntarily in the future, have services to render and gifts to offer, if we but understand their motives and treat them fairly. The evolving of American life and the raising of our standards of citizenship depend on the joint contributions of native and foreign born working together in a spirit of friendly understanding and cheerful cooperation. Americanization applies directly to the immigrant, but the native American must see to it that his life exemplifies the Americanism which we wish the immigrant to emulate.
SIGNIFICANT FEDERAL CENSUS DATA ON SIZE OF THE IMMIGRANT EDUCATION PROBLEM

Granting the general definition that Americanization has to do with promoting good citizenship for the native and foreign born, we shall consider now the problem of education for immigrants, and especially the approximate number that need school help.

No immigrant can participate intelligently in American life unless he has a good working knowledge of English. He must speak and understand our language, and should be able to read and write simple English. Moreover, he should be familiar with the important eras of American history and the significant facts in our national development. He must understand the form of our Government, the duties and privileges of a citizen, and the real meaning of citizenship in our Republic. The ability to use English and a knowledge of American history and Government are not as essential for his Americanization as a genuine feeling of loyalty to the United States. No one can command or control the immigrant’s feelings toward America, but fortunately most of these newcomers are well disposed when they come. The schools can teach English, history, and civics, but the inculcation of loyalty can come only through inspiration from contacts with good American citizens.

How many immigrants are there in the United States, and how many need school help in the Americanization process? The 1920 Federal census shows the following:

1. Total number of foreign-born persons .............................................. 13,712,754
2. Total number of aliens .......................................................... 4,364,909
3. Total number of illiterate foreign born (unable to write in any language and presumably unable to read) ........................................... 1,763,740

It is obvious that all illiterate immigrants who possess normal physical and mental faculties would be helped by attending English classes.

No data are available to show what percentage of the 4,364,909 aliens need school help. Undoubtedly many well-educated immigrants can fit themselves for citizenship by private home study and reading. On the other hand, most aliens, from non-English-speaking countries in particular, would be benefited by instruction in English and citizenship. This means attendance at evening classes by all except those who would benefit from private or correspondence instruction. Regardless of educational attainments, any immigrant who aspires to become a citizen should receive from the United States Government authoritative, definite, practical information as to the methods and requirements of naturalization. On these general principles it is fair to assume that more than 3,000,000 aliens need school help before taking the oath of allegiance to the Government of the United States.
Number of aliens and of foreign-born illiterates, according to States (1920 Federal census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Adult aliens</th>
<th>Foreign-born illiterates</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Adult aliens</th>
<th>Foreign-born illiterates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>40,427</td>
<td>11,604</td>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>33,382</td>
<td>14,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>34,088</td>
<td>13,746</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>1,772</td>
<td>671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>1,231</td>
<td>8,877</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>1,934</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>442,351</td>
<td>135,720</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>3,873</td>
<td>861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>57,007</td>
<td>28,157</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>10,446</td>
<td>2,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>159,925</td>
<td>63,131</td>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>5,272</td>
<td>2,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>1,041,120</td>
<td>380,603</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>3,356</td>
<td>1,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>273,057</td>
<td>111,356</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>2,082</td>
<td>1,067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>541,510</td>
<td>259,812</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>2,283</td>
<td>1,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>218,084</td>
<td>84,357</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>2,283</td>
<td>1,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>79,602</td>
<td>17,553</td>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>9,498</td>
<td>5,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>272,208</td>
<td>131,906</td>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>166,061</td>
<td>112,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>201,549</td>
<td>70,335</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>166,061</td>
<td>112,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>90,914</td>
<td>38,369</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>33,625</td>
<td>5,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>72,619</td>
<td>26,213</td>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>66,705</td>
<td>2,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>20,970</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>12,975</td>
<td>4,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>57,093</td>
<td>17,676</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>28,142</td>
<td>14,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>13,719</td>
<td>7,289</td>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>14,032</td>
<td>7,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>7,290</td>
<td>3,848</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>40,785</td>
<td>19,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>22,167</td>
<td>9,468</td>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>3,184</td>
<td>1,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>21,366</td>
<td>11,201</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>5,074</td>
<td>1,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>7,164</td>
<td>3,373</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>52,539</td>
<td>11,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>30,674</td>
<td>15,175</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>23,126</td>
<td>5,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>6,533</td>
<td>1,729</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>231,471</td>
<td>69,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>8,110</td>
<td>2,150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Care must be exercised in interpreting the above statistics on the number of foreign born reported as aliens in 1920. These totals have been increased by the number of new arrivals and have been decreased by the number who have been naturalized during the five-year period from 1920 to 1925. The number of aliens admitted to citizenship in the United States during the fiscal year July 1, 1923, to June 30, 1924, was 150,510. Using this figure as an average, the total number admitted since 1920 is 750,000, which represents approximately 17 per cent of the total number reported in 1920. A deduction of 20 per cent from the total for any State would give a fair estimate of the number of aliens in 1925.

No statistics are available to show the number of illiterate foreign-born adults who have learned to read and write during the five-year period since 1920.

SIZE OF NATIONAL ILLITERACY PROBLEM AMONG THE NATIVE BORN

The native illiterate population in the United States by the 1920 Federal census, is as follows: Native white illiterates, 1,242,472; native negro illiterates, 1,842,161. It is significant to note that the native illiterate group represents 64 per cent of our total national illiteracy problem. The total number of native illiterates in 1920, however, shows a marked decrease as compared with the number in 1910 and 1900. The 3,000,000 citizens of the United States who are...
unable to read and write constitute a challenge to American education. The immediate extension of adequate programs of adult elementary education would insure a marked reduction of illiterates in the census of 1930.

Number of native illiterates, according to States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Native white</th>
<th>Native negro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>8,396</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>1,973</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>5,619</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>7,780</td>
<td>2,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>2,255</td>
<td>839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>2,927</td>
<td>1,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>28,406</td>
<td>5,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>9,696</td>
<td>5,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>38,870</td>
<td>14,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>33,726</td>
<td>12,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>27,929</td>
<td>6,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>30,907</td>
<td>10,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>14,172</td>
<td>2,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>19,449</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>5,955</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>6,275</td>
<td>1,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>47,006</td>
<td>18,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>1,397</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>1,490</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>5,367</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>7,179</td>
<td>4,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>2,427</td>
<td>7,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>15,368</td>
<td>35,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>8,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>70,475</td>
<td>122,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>44,324</td>
<td>10,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>104,854</td>
<td>135,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>38,742</td>
<td>181,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>60,746</td>
<td>180,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>13,166</td>
<td>36,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>112,206</td>
<td>40,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>101,805</td>
<td>79,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>65,394</td>
<td>210,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>22,222</td>
<td>205,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>41,411</td>
<td>79,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>81,857</td>
<td>206,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>30,418</td>
<td>14,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>50,643</td>
<td>102,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>1,067</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>25,519</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>3,233</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>2,379</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>8,747</td>
<td>1,579</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The social, political, economic, and cultural losses due to illiteracy can not be estimated. Disrespect for law, disregard for personal and community health standards, suspicion, ignorance, and an undemocratic point of view—all these undesirable conditions are generally found in districts with high percentages of illiterate adults.

A NATIONAL SURVEY OF STATE PROGRAMS OF ADULT EDUCATION IN 1925

In May, 1925, the Federal Commissioner of Education sent a questionnaire on elementary education in English and citizenship for adults to every State superintendent of education in the United States. The questions asked in this report covered the following:

1. State legislation favoring this work.
2. State educational leadership.
3. State financial assistance.
4. Number of local communities providing adult classes.
5. Number of adult students enrolled in 1923 and 1924.
7. Present outlook for this work.

Returns were received from 44 of the 48 States and from Alaska, Virgin Islands, Canal Zone, and Hawaii.

1 Results of the questionnaire appear on a following page.
The following summaries show the returns according to geographical districts:

States that have enacted legislation favoring the establishment of adult schools number 34, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Montana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>Idaho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>Virgin Islands</td>
<td>Alaska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

States that furnish leadership for adult education in the State departments of education number 27, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgin Islands</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>South Dakota</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

States that provide financial aid to local districts conducting adult classes number 24, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
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<tr>
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<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virgin Islands</td>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
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<td>California</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
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<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local communities in which adult classes are conducted, reported from 28 States, number 1,310.

Students enrolled in classes for adult illiterates and adult foreign born in 25 States numbered approximately 286,000 in 1924.

States conducting special teacher-training courses for adult schools number 14, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>Maine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the 286,000 students recorded officially from the 25 States in the above survey, there are undoubtedly 50,000 adults enrolled in classes in the larger cities of those States, which have not provided State leadership for this work; for example, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Baltimore, Trenton, New Orleans, and Milwaukee.

This grand total of more than 336,000 adult students is the most significant proof of the strength of the adult elementary education movement in the United States. Despite waning of public interest in Americanization and the serious retrenchment policy in public expenditures, the school programs for native illiterates and adult foreign born have steadily improved during the past five years, and the general outlook for the Nation is most promising.

The 1920 Federal census shows that every State in the Union has more than 10,000 foreign-born adults and native illiterates. Thirty-four States to date have recognized the importance and the need of public-school programs for adults needing elementary civic instruction and have enacted legislation favoring this work. It is significant to note, however, that in only 27 of these States has the work been recognized by the State department of education as deserving the services of a supervisor on full time or part time.

The rapid development and expansion of adult programs in those States where trained leaders have been appointed in the department of education prove the value and need for personal leadership in the 25 States and Territories where no professional leadership has been provided.

Financial aid to local communities conducting adult classes is provided by 27 States. The form of State aid varies considerably, but the general practice in most of the States is to furnish reimbursement on the dollar for dollar basis. The Massachusetts State-aid law, which has been copied in several Eastern States, is as follows:

Sec. 9. The department, with the cooperation of any town applying therefor, may provide for such instruction in the use of English for adults unable to speak, read, or write the same, and in the fundamental principles of government and other subjects adapted to fit the American citizenship, as shall jointly be approved by the local school committee and the department. Schools and classes established therefor may be held in public-school buildings, in industrial establishments, or in such other places as may be approved in like manner. Teachers and supervisors employed therein by a town shall be chosen and their compensation fixed by the school committee; subject to the approval of the department.

Sec. 10. At the expiration of each school year, and on approval by the department, the Commonwealth shall pay to every town providing such instruction in conjunction with the department one-half the amount expended for supervision and instruction by such town for said year.

The teaching of English and citizenship to adult aliens requires a methodology and subject matter quite distinct from the work in day schools for children. Special training is essential for good teaching.
of adults, and the increased enrollment in States where such training has been provided is due in large measure to the endorsements of the new type of teaching by the immigrants and native illiterates who have been taught by trained experts who know what to teach, how to teach, and how much to teach. There is no more important or valuable form of State service than that of training teachers. Fourteen States offer such training. Obviously, there is an urgent need for the immediate expansion of this phase of the work in every State.
## Elementary Education in English and Citizenship for Adults by States

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<th>Does State give financial aid to local communities for this work?</th>
<th>Number of local communities having classes for foreign-born or native illiterates</th>
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- Number.
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- Does State conduct special teacher training courses for adult classes?
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### Enrollment of Adult Literates and Foreign-born in English and Citizenship Classes

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### Number of Local Communities Having Classes for Foreign-born or Illiterates

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FEDERAL LEADERSHIP IN ADULT EDUCATION

From 1915 to 1919 the Federal Bureau of Education provided educational leadership for immigrant education programs in the United States. Mr. H. H. Wheaton and Mr. Fred C. Butler rendered valuable assistance to the school people and representatives of civic organizations who were interested in improving the then limited programs of Americanization. This work of the bureau was discontinued soon after the war, owing to financial refinements. The schools suffered when Federal direction was withdrawn, and especially in 1919, when public opinion had been educated as to the need for Americanization programs by the war-time propaganda on this subject.

The State and local directors of school programs for aliens in 1920 organized as a department in the National Education Association. The outstanding aim of this organization has been to secure Federal educational direction for this work. The department of immigrant education was enlarged in 1924 to include the supervisors and teachers of native illiterates; and the name was changed to the National Department of Adult Education of the N. E. A. At the 1925 meeting of this department in Indianapolis, resolutions were adopted indorsing the recently announced competitive examination for the position of specialist in adult education in the United States Bureau of Education. The appointment of such a specialist will undoubtedly strengthen the work nationally and will insure the necessary development of adult-education programs in the large number of States where the ambitious illiterate and immigrant have no opportunity for learning English and preparing for citizenship.

The immigration restriction laws of 1924 have cut down considerably the number of new immigrants to be admitted to the United States in the future, and consequently the number needing instruction in English and citizenship. Attention is called, however, to three significant considerations, as follows:

1. The number of immigrants admitted under the new law in 1924 was 706,896.
2. The total number of illiterate foreign-born persons residing in the United States in 1920 was 1,763,740.
3. The total number of aliens residing in the United States in 1920 was 4,364,909.

Obviously we have a tremendous educational problem on our hand in the number of foreign born now here who need school help, and an annual influx of approximately 500,000 under the new law is large enough to need a continuous program of adult citizenship education.

There is considerable misunderstanding in the minds of many people about the need for further work. Surely the facts set forth in the three considerations listed answer this question in convincing
form. No extended reference will be made in this report to the educational activities of the Bureau of Naturalization. Suffice it to say that this Federal office has furnished the public schools an abundant supply of lesson materials for English and citizenship classes. The schools have been helped also by the lists of names and addresses of applicants for first and second papers provided by the bureau. The school people generally have cooperated with the Bureau of Naturalization in preparing petitioners for naturalization procedure.

The present outlook for effective cooperation between all public agencies that touch the immigrant in his adjustment to the normal life of an American citizen is most hopeful. The schools can not accomplish this work alone. School leaders and teachers must invite and seek the active cooperation of every group of citizens interested in helping immigrants to become truly Americanized.

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