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The German-English Academy, the National German-American Teachers' Seminary, and the Public School System in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1851–1919

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On May 21, 1901, a number of prominent Milwaukee citizens and school officials met in the hall of the Milwaukee Turner Society to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the German-English Academy, a German-American private associational school for boys and girls. The representative of the Milwaukee public school system, German-born Superintendent Siefert, used the occasion to pay tribute to "the many benefits" the city's public schools had received and were still receiving, "directly and indirectly," from the German-English Academy, as well as from the National German-American Teachers' Seminary, which had been affiliated with the Academy since its founding in 1878. "The German English Academy had a mission to perform," Siefert continued, "and it has performed it well." The dissemination of "rational methods of teaching," the establishment of "our magnificent Museum," and "the early introduction . . . of the Kindergarten system . . . [are] largely due to the influence of the German English Academy." Referring to the Academy's bilingual character, already emphasized in its name, and to the prominent professional positions held by many of its former students, Siefert added: "[T]hrough it [the Academy] was demonstrated the possibility of teaching in two languages simultaneously." In concluding his address, the superintendent did not forget to honor the "excellent teachers" in the Milwaukee public schools who had received their training in the seminary and who, in his words, were "exercising a salutary influence on . . . their fellow teachers . . . from other institutions."[1]

Most of the graduates from the seminary employed in the Milwaukee

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1. Quotes taken from *Fiftieth Annual Report of the German-English Academy* (Milwaukee, 1901), 12–13; for the biography of Siefert, see John G. Gregory, *History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin* (Chicago, 1931), vol. II, 1158.

public school system were German-language teachers. German-language instruction had been introduced on an optional basis into all the city's grade schools during the late 1860s. Although there were opponents of that instruction from the beginning, enrollment figures went up, and in 1899, 73 percent of the students were taking German as an optional subject. Thus, by the turn of the century, German seemed to be a rather stable part of the curriculum, accepted not only by a majority of German-Americans but by the larger Anglo-American public as well.[2]

Less than twenty years later, in 1919, the situation had dramatically changed. In Milwaukee as well as in practically all other American cities, German-language lessons had been banned from the public grade schools. As a result, the National German-American Teachers' Seminary was forced to close because of a lack of students. Furthermore, the former German-English Academy had changed its name in 1918 to the Milwaukee University School, and at the same time had made German no more than an option in the curriculum, thus abandoning the founders' principle of strict bilingualism.[3]

In examining the relationship between the German-English Academy, the National German-American Teachers' Seminary, and the Milwaukee public schools more closely, it is not my intention to give an account of the various innovations in the American school system that – rightly or wrongly – have been attributed to the influence of German-American educational theory and practice.[4] Rather than presenting another piece of "contributionist" historiography, this essay focuses on German-language instruction, which was the main concern of the German-American educators at the time but which, in contrast to gymnastics, drawing, and other branches of learning that they advocated, failed to become part of American elementary schooling.

German-American educators and other leaders of the German-American community were preoccupied with German-language instruction for ped-

2. See Milwaukee Board of School Commissioners, *Annual Report 1876/77,* 78–9; *1898/99,* 101. See also *National German-American Teachers' Seminary* (Milwaukee, 1917), 47–55.
3. See "Gegen fremde Sprachen," *Milwaukee Herold,* August 7, 1918; Steven L. Schlossman, "Is There an American Tradition of Bilingual Education? German in the Public Elementary Schools, 1840–1919," *American Journal of Education* 91 (1983):139–86, 177–8; Frieda Meyer Voigt, *The Engelmann Heritage* (Milwaukee, 1951), 4;*'Sixty-Seventh Annual Report of the Milwaukee University School* (Milwaukee, 1918), 16, 69.
4. See, e.g., Hermann Schuricht, *Geschichte der deutschen Schulbestrebungen in Amerika* (Leipzig, 1884); Ludwig Klemm, "Das Schulwesen in den Vereinigten Staaten," in Armin Tenner, ed., *Amerika* (Berlin and New York, 1886), 33–83; Albert B. Faust, *The German Element in the United States* (New York, 1927), vol. II, 201–49; on the filiopietistic tradition in German-American historiography in general, see Kathleen Neils Conzen, "The Writing of German-American History," *The Immigration History Newsletter* 12, 2 (November 1980):1–14.

agogical reasons but, even more so, for ethnic reasons. Especially for German immigrants, who were divided along economic, political, and religious lines, ethnic identity basically had to be defined in cultural terms. The vernacular was the most prominent cultural bond, and thus its maintenance was of crucial importance for the very existence of the ethnic group.[5]

The rise and fall of German as the medium and subject of instruction in the schools will be discussed within the context of the assimilation process of Milwaukee's German-American community. Although it was during the First World War or shortly thereafter, when anti-German sentiment ran high, that instruction in the German language was given up in all public and most private grade schools, the war functioned only as a catalyst, not as a cause for abandoning German. The crisis of German-language instruction had already made itself felt around the turn of the century. It was evident in the public as well as in the private and parochial schools, although it took different forms in these systems. The crisis was not brought about by attacks from the outside, from nativist spokesmen or competing ethnic groups. It resulted, rather, from social and mental changes that had been taking place within the German-American community itself and that clearly indicate, long before World War I, and advanced stage in the assimilation process.

This essay first traces the founding and early history of the German-English Academy and similar German-American schools, and describes the efforts of their founders and supporters to reform the Milwaukee public schools, particularly to implement German-language instruction therein. Then it discusses the adoption of German as an optional branch of study in the public grade school system and its impact on German-American private schooling. Finally, this essay presents an analysis of the crisis of German-language instruction that caused its decline and facilitated its abandonment during or after the First World War.

The sources that I have evaluated include the annual reports of the German-English Academy and the National German-American Teachers' Seminary, unpublished minutes of the *Milwaukee Schulverein,* the proceedings of the Milwaukee Board of School Commissioners as well as local German-American newspapers, and pamphlets and journals published by

5. See Kathleen Neils Conzen, "The Paradox of German-American Assimilation," *Yearbook of German American Studies* 1 (1982):153–60, and "German-Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity," in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds., *America and the Germans. An Assessment of a Three-Hundred Year History* (Philadelphia, 1985), vol. I, 131–47; David Gerber, "Language Maintenance, Ethnic Group Formation, and Public Schools: Changing Patterns of German Concern, Buffalo, 1837–1874," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 4 (1984–5):31–61.

the National German-American Teachers' Alliance that was formed in 1870.[6]

In May 1849, Peter Engelmann, a graduate of the University of Berlin and a dismissed secondary school teacher, was forced to leave the German states to avoid persecution for his revolutionary activities. He shared this fate with quite a number of German teachers who had become heavily involved not only in the movement for educational reform but also in the general political revolution of 1848–9, particularly its radical wing. Engelmann emigrated to the United States, the favorite destination for many Forty-Eighters. After an unsuccessful attempt at "Latin farming" and a short period as a farmhand in Michigan, he found employment as a private tutor and village school teacher in Milwaukee County. Soon he was well know for his excellent teaching. Thus, when he moved to the city of Milwaukee in 1851, he was offered the position of principal of the German-English Academy that was to open in July of that year. Engelmann directed the school until he died in 1874 at the age of fifty-one. By that time, he had gained such a high reputation that the German-English Academy was far better know as "Engelmann's School."[7]

The German-English Academy was founded by a group of German professionals, artisans, and small businesspeople who, for the most part, had emigrated voluntarily and settled in Milwaukee well before 1848. Though not political refugees themselves, these immigrants came from the same classes, had comparable educational backgrounds, and held ideals similar to those of the Forty-Eighters. They shared their conviction that, in view of American nativism, political corruption, racism, slavery, and the influential position of the Protestant churches, the United States was still far from being the model of an ideal democracy, as it had been eulogized by leftist liberals of the German *Vormärz*. They also shared the strong belief in education as a decisive means of effecting ethical change and social and political reforms.

6. Research was done in Archives of the Milwaukee University School; Milwaukee County Historical Society; Milwaukee Public Library; Legislative Reference Library of Milwaukee; Milwaukee Area Research Center at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee; State Historical Society of Wisconsin and Memorial Library, Madison; and Library of the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Freie Universität Berlin.

7. See Peter Engelmann, "Autobiography," MS, n.p., Engelmann Papers, Milwaukee County Historical Society; Albert Wallber, "Die Deutsch-Englische Akademie," in *Festschrift zur Einweihungsfeier der neuen Heimstätte deutsch-amerikanischer Erziehung in Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, 1891), 7–28, 14–15. Engelmann, the son of a Rhenish farmer, had edited a democratic newspaper and organized a democratic society in Kreuznach. For the German teachers' movement, see Thomas Nipperdey, "Volksschule und Revolution im Vormärz," in Ulrich Herrmann, ed., *Schule und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert* (Weinheim and Basel, 1977), 111–36; Wilh. Appens, *Die pädagogischen Bewegungen des Jahres 1848* (Elberfeld, 1917).

For that reason, they established musical, Turner (gymnastic), and freethinking societies, a whole network of liberal-minded associations that aimed at the enlightenment of the people. It was in this context that the German-English Academy was conceived and organized.[8]

German-American liberals, in contrast to their Catholic and Lutheran compatriots, were ardent advocates of public education. They held it to be not only the right but the duty of a republican government to provide free secular schooling for future citizens. The public schools that they encountered in the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century, however, did not meet the educational standards that they had been used to in Germany. Therefore they felt the necessity to organize their own private schools. This was true not only for the established urban centers of the East, but especially for Milwaukee.[9]

By the early 1850s, the city of Milwaukee had just been carved out of the wilderness. It already had a population of over 20,000, of whom more than a third were German immigrants, but its infrastructure was still in its infancy.[10] This was particularly noticeable in the school system, which would not keep pace with the burgeoning population: As late as 1855, less than 50 percent of the approximately 10,000 children of school age attended either a private or a public school.[11] The majority of the private schools were German Lutheran or Catholic parochial schools and thus unacceptable to Milwaukee's freethinking German immigrants. The public schools, on the other hand, did not satisfy their educational aspirations either. They did not provide any instruction in the German language; they were overcrowded and poorly equipped; and they suffered from a lack of qualified teachers and professional supervision. Learning by rote was the prevalent

8. See Rudolf A. Koss, *Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, 1871), 261ff.; Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee 1836–1860: Accommodation and Community in a Frontier City* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1976), 172–84; Bettina Goldberg, "Radical German-American Freethinkers and the Socialist Labor Movement. The *Freie Gemeinde* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin," in Hartmut Keil, ed., *German Workers' Culture in the United States 1850 to 1920* (Washington, D.C., and London, 1988), 241–60; see also Eckhart G. Franz, "Das Amerikabild der deutschen Revolution von 1848/49: Zum Problem der Übertragung gewachsener Verfassungsformen," *Beihefte zum Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 2 (1958): 104–8, 134–8.

9. For German-American criticism of the American public school system, see, e.g., Rudolf Dulon, *Aus Amerika über Schule, deutsche Schule, amerikanische Schule und deutsch-amerikanische Schule* (Leipzig and Heidelberg, 1866), summarized in Bettina Goldberg, "The Forty-Eighters and the School System in America: The Theory and Practice of Reform," in Charlotte L. Brancaforte, ed., *The German Forty-Eighters in the United States* (New York, 1989), 203–18, 207–8; for a survey of German-American private and associational schools, see Schuricht, *Geschichte,* 56–63.

10. See Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee,* 10–15; Bayrd Still, *Milwaukee: The History of a City* (Madison, 1965), 111ff.

11. According to the school census of 1855, 2,013 out of 9,346 children of school age attended public schools, 1,996 private schools, and 5,337 no school at all ("Das Board der Schul-Commissäre," *Banner und Volksfreund* (Milwaukee), October 6, 1855).

method of instruction, and the subjects taught were generally limited to reading, writing, and arithmetic.[12]

To ensure their children a thorough bilingual education and, at the same time, to offer a model for the public schools, in May 1851 twenty-six German citizens, among them the editors of Milwaukee's two daily German newspapers, joined to form the *Milwaukie-Schulverein*. Less than two months later, on July 1, their associational school, the German-English Academy, opened in a rented building on the city's east side.[13] "The school aims at providing the pupils," Peter Engelmann wrote in his autobiography,

> with the same sort of education which they would receive in a good German *Realschule*. The only difference is that in our school they are instructed free of all religious bias and are just as fluent in English as they are in German.[14]

In accordance with this aim, from the beginning, the school offered a broad curriculum that became even more comprehensive in later years. Elementary subjects in 1851 included not only English and German reading, writing, and grammar as well as arithmetic, but also memory exercises, object lessons, geography, history, biology, and drawing. In the upper class, penmanship, natural history, mathematics, the sciences, and technical drawing were added. Thus the school put strong emphasis on the sciences, not only for vocational reasons but also to counter the influence of religion and superstition.[15]

The German-English Academy started in 1851 with two teachers and forty children enrolled in two classes. During the course of the decade, the number of pupils increased, and in 1860 269 children received their education in the school, which employed eight teachers and consisted of six classes.[16]

The German-English Academy was the first school of this type in Milwaukee, but it did not remain the only one. Encouraged by the early development of the Academy, German-Americans living on the city's west and south sides established similar schools for their respective areas. However, the six German-English schools that opened in Milwaukee during the

12. See Koss, *Milwaukee,* 331–2; "Die deutsche Schule und Familie," *Banner und Volksfreund,* June 9, 1855; Patrick Donnelly, "The Milwaukee Public Schools," in John W. Stearns, ed., *The Columbian History of Education in Wisconsin* (Milwaukee, 1893), 436–65, 436–42.
13. See *Wisconsin Banner* (Milwaukee), April 24, May 2, 10, 14, 17, 22, 23, 26, 31; June 6, 12, 17, 28, 1851.
14. Engelmann, "Autobiography"; for a more detailed account of the purposes of the school, see *Statuten, Neben-Gesetze, Verordnungen und Regulationen des Milwaukie Schul-Vereins* (Milwaukee, 1863), 13–14.
15. See "Schul-Verein," *Wisconsin Banner,* June 17, 1851.
16. "Milwaukie Schul-Verein," *Banner und Volksfreund,* April 14, 1860.

1850s and the first half of the 1860s reached only 1,085 children even at the height of their influence in the mid-1860s. At the same time, German-American parochial schools were attended by over 3,000 children and the public schools by more than 9,000.[17] In view of these figures, even those German-American educators who advocated a comprehensive system of German-American schooling must have become convinced that this dream was rather illusory.[18] The secular German-English schools, it was evident, would never reach more than a tiny percentage of German-American children. The educator for the great majority of Milwaukee's children, including those from German immigrant families, was to become the American public school. Thus, the public schools had to be the real focus of German-American activities for educational reform.

Milwaukee's German-American liberals were involved in school politics as early as 1846, when the city was incorporated. At that time, however, German immigration had just begun, and only one out of fifteen members of Milwaukee's first public school board, appointed by the common council, bore a German name. He was Moritz Schöffler, a trained printer and the publisher of Milwaukee's first German newspaper, the *Wisconsin Banner;* later he would become one of the founding members of the Milwaukee *Schulverein.*[19] During the 1850s and 1860s, when more than a third of Milwaukee's population was German born, German-American representation on the board increased, and in 1867, for the first time, German immigrants made up 50 percent of Milwaukee's school commissioners. Like Schöffler, they came from the liberal camp, and many of them were also involved in German-American associational schools.[20]

These school officials, supported by other German-American activists, mainly from freethinker and Turner circles, strongly advocated a whole list of educational reforms. They demanded, for instance, a professional system of school supervision; the employment of qualified German-Americans as teachers and principals; the use of fewer and better textbooks; the adoption of teaching methods that do justice to children; the introduction of music,

17. Milwaukee Board of School Commissioners, *Annual Report* 1866/67: 34ff. The secular private and associational schools were the German-English Academy, the Anneke-School, the high school of the second ward, the German-English school of the fourth ward, the high school of the fifth and eighth wards, and the West Hill School. The German-American Lutheran parishes maintained seven schools, the German-American Catholics three.
18. For such concepts, see Goldberg, "The Forty-Eighters," 208–9.
19. See Jerome A. Watrous, ed., *Memoirs of Milwaukee County* (Madison, 1909), vol. I, 384; for the biography of Schöffler, see ibid., 183–4; for his membership in the Milwaukee *Schulverein,* see footnote 13.
20. See "Im Board der Schul-Commissäre," *Herold* (Milwaukee), April 27, 1867; "Milwaukee, Wis.," *Amerikanische Schulzeitung N.F.* 4, 3 (December 1873):9; *History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin* (Chicago, 1881), 269–70; for the ethnic composition of Milwaukee's population, see Still, *Milwaukee,* 574–5.

gymnastics, and drawing lessons; and last, but not least, the adequate consideration of their German vernacular in the public school curriculum.[21]

Their reform efforts not only provoked attacks from the Anglo-American nativist camp, but also met with opposition from Milwaukee's numerous German-American churches. Both Catholic and Lutheran clergy knew that the projected improvements of the already tuition-free public school system, and in particular the attempts to introduce German-language instruction, were not least intended to weaken their own parochial schools. Although the Lutherans, partly out of ethnic motives, remained comparatively moderate in their criticism, the German-American Catholic clergy launched an aggressive campaign against any innovation in the public school system, including the teaching of German, that would involve higher costs and thus result in higher general taxation.[22]

Whereas the opposition of the churches was largely to be expected, it is quite surprising that these reform efforts did not attract much attention among Milwaukee's German-American population. This was true not only for the strictly educational part of the reform program: Even the purely ethnic demand for German-language instruction was received with only slight interest. Already in 1857, Milwaukee's school board had passed a resolution providing for the hiring of German language teachers in all schools where a need for German language instruction was felt. Only the school of the sixth ward, however, whose representative on the board had brought up the issue, made an application.[23] Three years later, the editors of the German-American daily *Banner und Volksfreund* found it necessary to appeal to the German population of Milwaukee's other wards to make known to the school board their urgent need for instruction in their mother tongue. However, the local German-American press reported only on two

21. See the *Proceedings* and *Annual Reports* of the Milwaukee Board of School Commissioners; see also Watrous, *Memoirs,* vol. I, 390–418.
22. See the dispute between Milwaukee's German-American newspapers *Columbia* (Catholic) and *Germania* (Protestant), which lasted from November 1873 to August 1874 (esp. January 22 and 24, 1874); see also "Die Lehrerbundsbestrebungen und die kirchliche Presse," *Erziehungsblätter N.F.* 13, 9 (June 1883):9. The Catholic campaign reveals that German immigrants were far from being "unified," as Schlossman argues, "in insisting that public schools incorporate their native language into the curriculum" ("Is There an American Tradition?" 143).
23. At that time, the school board consisted of twenty-seven members, only six of them German. When the resolution was passed on June 3, 1857, nineteen school commissioners were present; not only the five German-Americans in attendance but also nine other members of the board voted in favor of the resolution. The initiator of the resolution was Ferdinand Kühn (1821–1901), one of the founders and a lifelong officer of the Milwaukee *Schulverein* (see "Collegium der Schul-Commissäre," *Banner und Volksfreund,* May 2 and June 8, 1857; *Kurzgefa te Geschichte der Deutsch-Englischen Akademie, des Nationalen Deutsch-Am. Lehrerseminars und des Turnlehrerseminars des Nordam. Turnerbundes* [Milwaukee, 1901], 23; for the biography of Kühn, see Watrous, *Memoirs,* vol. I, 134–5).

occasions about meetings or similar activities of German immigrants to lobby for the implementation of German-language teaching, and in the second case the meeting had to be canceled for lack of participation.[24]

When German was introduced as an optional subject in those schools situated in predominantly German wards during the 1860s, and when German-language instruction was eventually started citywide in 1869, this was not the consequence of political pressure from below or the result of an organized ethnic movement; rather, it was a reform from above that was achieved by collaboration between German-American and Anglo-American educators and school politicians.[25] The basis of cooperation on the Anglo-American side was less a particular esteem for the German language than the recognition that the public schools would fulfill their function as agents of Americanization only when they reached the majority of children who were to be Americanized. Offering instruction in the vernacular seemed to be a suitable means of drawing closer to this end.[26]

The system of German-language instruction implemented in Milwaukee's public schools did not follow the bilingual model used in the city's private German-English schools. Rather than becoming the medium of instruction for some of the elementary branches, German in the public schools remained restricted to one optional language lesson daily that was added to the otherwise English-only curriculum.[27] Limited as this instruction was, it served its purpose. Public school enrollment rose, especially in Milwaukee's heavily German wards. There it had been below average in the early 1860s, but it was well above average in the 1870s and the following decades.[28]

24. See "Die öffentlichen Schulen," *Banner und Volksfreund,* May 16, 1860; "In einer am 24. Mai in P. Bichler's Halle abgehaltenen Massenversammlung," ibid., June 2, 1860; "Ein Schul-Meeting," *Herold,* June 20, 1867.
25. See "In den öffentlichen Stadtschulen," *Banner und Volksfreund,* September 1, 1861, and January 5, 1862; reports on the public schools in the second, ninth, and sixth wards, *Herold,* January 17 and 25, February 2, 1867; "Verhandlungen des Schul-Rathes," ibid., October 2, 1867; "Schulraths-Verhandlungen," ibid., September 3, 1869.
26. See Milwaukee Board of School Commissioners, *Annual Report* 1872/73: 113, 1876/77: 84–7; see also Schlossman, "Is There an American Tradition?", 150–8.
27. See Milwaukee Board of School Commissioners, *Annual Report* 1872/73: XXXIV, 1881/82: LXXXVI ff., 1898/99: 94, 1902/3: 145, 1912/13: 119; for the far more comprehensive German-language instruction that was offered in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Baltimore, see Carolyn Toth, "A History of German-English Bilingual Education: The Continuing Cincinnati Tradition," diss., Univ. of Cincinnati, 1988; Schlossman, "Is There an American Tradition?", 146–9; Heinz Kloss, "Die deutschamerikanische Schule," *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 7 (1962):141–75, 146–8.
28. See the results of the school census, particularly for the predominantly German wards 2, 6, 9, and 20, published in the *Annual Reports* of Milwaukee's Board of School Commissioners. In 1877 Superintendent MacAlister declared: "We . . . have acted wisely . . . the German instruction has brought large accessions to the Public Schools from the German population" (*Annual Report* 1876/77: 84).

This increase demonstrates that German-language instruction, though not the rallying point of an ethnic movement, was nevertheless desired by many immigrant parents as part of their children's education. It also reveals, however, that it did not take a bilingual system or preferential treatment of the German language to satisfy the ethnic aspirations of these parents. As soon as they found their vernacular considered at all, they were willing to send their children to the public schools, which in contrast to private or parochial schools did not charge tuition and, for that reason alone, were attractive in any case.

German-language instruction, as well as other innovations in the public school system, caused only a relative decline of the German-American parochial schools but a significant decrease in the secular German-English schools. These schools, in contrast to the church schools, did not differ basically from the public schools. Indeed, they offered a bilingual and a more comprehensive curriculum than the public schools. Their standards, however, were much higher than the educational aspirations of the average German immigrant of the 1870s and 1880s. The majority of Germans coming to Milwaukee after the Civil War were no longer educated craftsmen and shopkeepers from the more urbanized parts of Germany, but rather peasants and day laborers with a low educational background from the agrarian northeast. These immigrants had only limited financial means, and especially during the severe economic crisis of the 1870s, they were neither willing nor able to invest in education more than was absolutely necessary. If they were religiously inclined, they might enroll their children in parochial schools, which charged a very modest fee. Otherwise, they sent them to the secular public, but not the private, schools.[29]

Milwaukee's German-English schools had suffered from a chronic lack of funds from the beginning. Since their regular income, consisting of associational membership dues and tuition fees, had never been sufficient to cover operating costs, these schools had always been dependent on additional fund-raising through charity events and bazaars, which for the most part were organized by the women's auxiliary. During the 1870s and early

29. See Wallber, "Deutsch-Englische Akademie," 16–17; for the parochial schools, see the statistics on private schools in the *Annual Reports* of the Milwaukee Board of School Commissioners; for the shift in skills and regional origin of German immigrants, see Klaus J. Bade, "Die deutsche überseeische Massenauswanderung im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert," in Klaus J. Bade, ed., *Auswanderer - Wanderarbeiter–Gastarbeiter. Bevölkerung, Arbeitsmarkt und Wanderung in Deutschland seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Ostfildern, 1984), vol. 1, 259–99, 275–83; Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee,* 31; Walter D. Kamphoefner, *Westfalen in der Neuen Welt* (Münster, 1982), 96–7; further evidence will be presented in my forthcoming dissertation.

1880s, because of dwindling attendance, the financial problems became insurmountable; as a result, two of the German-English schools closed and three others were transformed into public schools.[30]

Thus, by the mid-1880s, the German-English Academy was the only secular school left, and even the Academy, though a laboratory school of the National German-American Teachers' Seminary since 1878, was not in stable condition. The number of students had decreased from 450 in 1865 to only 149 in 1885, and during the same year, Isidor Keller, director of both the Academy and the Teachers' Seminary, predicted the school's demise if it did not adjust to changed conditions. Whereas the public schools, Keller argued, were rather crowded, especially in their lower grades, the Academy's elementary classes, in contrast to earlier years, showed the lowest enrollment in the lower grades. This clearly indicated, he continued, that the great majority of even the educated German immigrants was rather satisfied with public common schooling; for that reason, there was no longer a sufficient demand for the type of education that the German-English Academy offered. To have a future at all, Keller concluded, the Academy had to give up its elementary classes, end its connection with the Teachers' Seminary, and gain a profile as a top-quality secondary school.[31]

Keller's views and his efforts to transfer the Teachers' Seminary to New York City met strong opposition, and he was forced to resign.[32] But his analysis proved to be correct. Although the Academy was to maintain its lower grades as well as its connection with the Teachers' Seminary, it gradually shifted its emphasis to secondary education and developed into a college preparatory school for Milwaukee's German-American elite. This took another twenty-four years. In 1909 the German-English Academy, after consolidation with the Anglo-American Milwaukee Academy, established

30. See "Die deutsch-englischen Schulen America's," *Herold,* April 16, 1869; Wallber, "Die Deutsch-Englische Akademie," 9–10, 16–17; Augustus J. Rogers, "Private and Parochial Schools," in Howard Louis Conard, ed., *History of Milwaukee from Its First Settlement to the Year 1895* (Chicago and New York, n.d.), vol. I, 181–90, 186.

31. *Bericht des Direktors an den Verwaltungs-Rath der "Deutsch-Englischen Akademie"* (Milwaukee, 1885), 4–15; *Bericht über das Nationale Deutsch-Amerikanische Lehrerseminar und die mit demselben als Uebungsschule verbundene Deutsch-Englische Akademie* (Milwaukee, 1886), 26–7; Wallber, "Die Deutsch-Englische Akademie," 11; for the history of the National German-American Teachers' Seminary, a normal school for bilingual preschool and grade-school teachers organized by the National German-American Teachers' Alliance in 1878, see *Kurzgefa te Geschichte,* 41–62; Voigt, *The Engelmann Heritage,* 27–103.

32. See *Erziehungs-Blätter* 15, 8 (May 1885):8–10; 15, 10 (July 1885):2–5, 8–10; 15, 11 (August 1885): 6–7. I. Keller was followed by H. Dorner, a Milwaukee public school teacher (Voigt, *The Engelmann Heritage,* 30–1).

its own high school department and presented itself as a school that "offered an unbroken education *from the Kindergarten to the University.*"[33] However, the first steps in that direction had already been taken in the 1880s.

At that time, the diplomas of the German-English Academy were not recognized by Milwaukee's school board; therefore its students, unlike those from the public schools, had to pass entrance examinations for the city's high schools. In view of the growing number of parents who aimed at a higher education for their children after graduation from the Academy, Albert Wallber wrote in 1891, this situation had become more and more detrimental to the school. Thus, during the 1880s and 1890s, in order to increase the attractiveness of the Academy, its director and teachers anxiously worked to meet the demands of the public school board. By 1901 they proudly reported the accreditation of their school.[34]

The formal recognition of the diplomas, urgently needed for survival, had only been achieved, however, after a far-reaching adaptation of the Academy's course of study to that of the public schools. Since the timetable could not be overloaded, during the process of adjustment German as the medium and subject of instruction was gradually cut back. Whereas in 1863 the German-English Academy had still followed a strictly bilingual curriculum prescribing the same amount of time for instruction in either language, the course of study of 1885 already provided for preferential treatment of English. From the third grade on, instruction in English made up more than 50 percent of the weekly timetable, rising to 74 percent in the eighth grade. By that time, however, German was still the medium of instruction for a number of subjects, including arithmetic in the elementary department, natural history or science in the first seven grades, and general history, starting in the third grade. Sixteen years later, when the school became accredited, this was no longer the case. With the exception of a course in world history, German was limited to language lessons, and English had become the medium of instruction for all the other branches of the curriculum.[35]

33. *Fifty-eighth Annual Report of the German-English Academy* (Milwaukee, 1909), 10. Until 1920 the school only offered higher education for boys (*Seventieth Annual Report of the Milwaukee University School* [Milwaukee, 1921], 1). The list of pupils published in the *Fifty-ninth Annual Report of the German-English Academy* (Milwaukee, 1910) and *Wright's Directory of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, 1910) made it possible to reconstruct the social composition of the student body; my findings show that almost all of the German-English Academy's 185 pupils came from upper-middle- or upper-class families.
34. See Wallber, "Die Deutsch-Englische Akademie," 21; *Einundzwanzigster Jahresbericht des Nationalen Deutsch-Amerikanischen Lehrerseminars und seiner Musterschule, der Deutsch-Englischen Akademie* (Milwaukee, 1900), 20; *Fiftieth Annual Report* (1901), 13.
35. See *Statuten* (1863), 15–23; *Bericht* (1886), 28–34; *Fiftieth Annual Report* (1901), 14–20.

Thus, by 1900, the German-English Academy had fundamentally changed its character. It still offered more comprehensive German-language instruction than the city's grade schools, but in order to satisfy the educational aspirations of its German-American clientele and to keep up with its public competitors, it had given up the strict bilingualism conceived by its founders and had made English the dominant language. In this respect, the German-English Academy was not unique. The German-American Catholic and Lutheran parochial schools had undergone a similar process for the same reasons. Milwaukee's German-American citizens, this clearly demonstrates, were well aware that a thorough knowledge of English rather than German was a necessary prerequisite for economic and social mobility in the New World. For that reason, they were ready to see the German lessons reduced; they were not willing to accept an education for their children that did not meet the standards of the public school system.[36]

After the turn of the century, German-language instruction was no longer felt to be a real need by Milwaukee's German-American population. Immigration from Germany had declined, and by 1910 the majority of German-American citizens had either been born in the United States or had already lived there for twenty years or more.[37] Many of them still subscribed to German newspapers or were members of German-speaking societies, but they did so for reasons of habit and tradition. They were no longer monolingual and therefore did not depend on their children's knowledge of German to communicate with them. On the contrary, numerous complaints of German-American educators, journalists, and clergymen suggest that English rather than German was the language spoken in most homes most of the time.[38]

This change was also noticeable in the public schools. German-American public school officials were anxious to demonstrate that German-language instruction was a generally accepted and necessary branch of the curriculum and that its results strongly justified its costs. As

36. For the marginalization of German in the parochial schools, see Bettina Goldberg, "The German Language in Milwaukee's Grade Schools, 1850–1920: The Case of the Catholic Schools" and " 'Our Fathers' Faith, Our Children's Language.' Cultural Change in Milwaukee's German Evangelical Lutheran Parishes of the Missouri Synod, 1850–1930," John F. Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien. Freie Universität Berlin, *Working Papers*, Nos. 17/1989, and 26/1990.
37. Computed from an ethnically mixed sample of 1,090 Milwaukee households based on the manuscript schedules of the U.S. Census on Population for 1910. Evidence will be presented in my forthcoming dissertation.
38. See, e.g., Karl Knortz, *Das Deutschthum der Vereinigten Staaten* (Hamburg, 1898), 67–8; "Die Deutschen und die deutsche Sprache," *Germania und Abendpost* (Milwaukee), June 13, 1900; Milwaukee Board of School Commissioners, *Annual Report* 1898/99:95.

early as 1902, they could not avoid mentioning, however, that for the majority of children from German-American families, what once had been instruction in the vernacular had already turned into foreign-language instruction. They also had to admit that many of these German-American children had little desire to learn the "difficult German language," and that, particularly in the upper grades, they showed a tendency to drop German lessons.[39] This indicates that despite high enrollment figures, German-language instruction was no longer flourishing. Well before World War I, it showed symptoms of a crisis that was brought about not by attacks from Anglo-American nativists but by the advanced linguistic assimilation of Milwaukee's German-American population. Thus, by 1902, the main arguments for German in the public schools, used by German-born Superintendent Lau in 1871 – that German-language teaching was "a natural desire on the part of the German population" and that a knowledge of German was "of considerable advantage in [Milwaukee's] business and social life" – had become invalid.[40]

German-American educators, journalists, and others, who had not only a nostalgic but a professional interest in the maintenance of the German language, observed this process with anxiety. If German were to have a future at all in the American public schools, they knew that it had to be based firmly on grounds other than ethnically defined needs and claims. The German language had to be put into an unassailable position comparable to that of Greek and Latin in neohumanist thinking. In order to ensure such a position, advocates of German-language instruction shifted the emphasis of their argument. In contrast to Polish or Italian, they stated, the German language was taught in the public schools not primarily for the immigrants' sake, but for its great importance to the larger Anglo-American public. The formal educational qualities of German, the superiority of German culture, literature, and science, and the first-rank political and economic position of the German Empire, they declared, made a thorough knowledge of the German language not only desirable but necessary for every educated American citizen. And for that reason, they concluded, German lessons would never become superfluous. The chauvinist and na-

39. See Milwaukee Board of School Commissioners, *Annual Report* 1902/3:144–5; "Korrespondenzen: Milwaukee," *Pädagogische Monatshefte* 3 (1901/2):210–12.

40. See Milwaukee Board of School Commissioners, *Annual Report* 1870/71:40, 1871/2:58–9. The high enrollment in German-language classes is not least due to the following rule, which largely compensated for the fact that German was not a compulsory subject: "It will be presumed that parents or guardians of pupils desire them to pursue the study of the German language, . . . unless formal notice to the contrary be furnished the principal of the school in each case" (ibid., 1870/1: 90).

tionalist tendency of this argument, which clearly indicates a generational change in ethnic leadership, were to become counterproductive during World War I. When everything German was suspicious, such statements of German-American educators aided those who denounced German-language instruction as publicly financed ideological support of the war enemy.[41]

In Milwaukee, German-language teaching came under attack from the English-language *Milwaukee Journal* and some superpatriotic organizations in the spring of 1917. Although the campaign did not show the aggressiveness and violence that it had in other places, in combination with the advanced assimilation of Milwaukee's German-American citizens it proved to be very effective. The editors of Milwaukee's German newspapers appealed to their readers to demonstrate that they would not let themselves be intimidated, but except for resolutions from the Turners and from three singing societies, there was no public outcry on the part of Milwaukee's German-American community. To the contrary, educators and journalists repeatedly lashed out at "the weakness and indifference of German-American parents," who were eager to remove their children from German classes right away. Thus, attendance at German-language instruction classes went down. Whereas in June 1917 more than 30,000 students were still enrolled, in March 1918 their number had declined to less than 12,000. In view of these figures, only five months later, in August, Milwaukee's public school board, which had been reluctant at first, resolved with a majority that included its German-American members to eliminate all foreign-language teaching in the lower grades by the end of the coming school year. German remained part of the high school curriculum, but in the elementary schools it was completely discontinued in June 1919.[42]

By that time, the Teachers' Seminary had already closed and the German-English Academy, because of pressure from its high school students and a large number of parents, had changed its name to Milwaukee University School. Unlike the public schools, it had not banished German from the

41. See, e.g., "Editorielles," *Pädagogische Monatshefte* 1 (1899/1900):23–5; M. D. Learned, "Deutsch gegen Englisch oder Deutsch neben Englisch," ibid., 2 (1900/1):290–3; "Korrespondenzen: Milwaukee," *Monatshefte für deutsche Sprache und Pädagogik* 10 (1909):182–3; 11 (1910):83; Joseph Winter, "Die Zukunft der deutschen Sprache in Amerika," ibid., 13 (1912):265–9; see also Henry J. Schmidt, "The Rhetoric of Survival: The Germanist in America from 1900 to 1925," in Trommler and McVeigh, *America and the Germans*, vol. II, 204–16.

42. See "Korrespondenzen: Milwaukee," *Monatshefte für deutsche Sprache und Pädagogik* 18 (1917):268–9; 19 (1918):46, 78; "Der Kampf um den deutschen Unterricht," *Vorwärts* (Milwaukee), April 28, 1917; "Der deutsche Unterricht in der Defensive," ibid., July 14, 1917; "Michel und der deutsche Unterricht," ibid., February 9, 1918; "Beharrt auf euerer Ansicht und auf euerem Rechte," *Germania-Herold* (Milwaukee), September 12, 1917; "Gegen fremde Sprachen," *Milwaukee Herold*, August 7, 1918; Still, *Milwaukee*, 461–2.

lower grades but made it an optional subject in 1918.[43] This arrangement, however, lasted for only a transitional period.

The Milwaukee University School was well on its way to developing into an American elite school, and as can be seen from the minutes, this process had the full backing of its board of trustees, consisting of prominent second-generation German-American businessmen. They were anxious to cast off the school's German heritage, which had no meaning to its students any longer and which was felt to be harmful to the school's reputation in Anglo-American circles. In view of the desired new profile of the school, it was less and less bearable that its director had been born and educated in the German Empire. Thus, in 1925, when the contract of Max Griebsch, principal since 1903, expired, it was not renewed, and an Anglo-American educator was appointed for that position instead.[44]

During the following years the curriculum was revised, and by the late 1920s the Milwaukee University School had finally broken with its past. It had not only abolished German from the elementary department but, ironically, it had also adopted one of the major arguments of the opponents of German-language instruction to justify this change. "It is the policy of our school," the catalog for 1928 states, "to begin the work in foreign languages in the junior high, for it is believed that a mastery of English expression should precede the learning of a foreign language."[45]

43. See "German-English Academy Ledger 1913–1920," 168, 171, 194, 206, 214–15, 218, 222, 231, 247, and "Minutes of the School Association of the German-English Academy 1908–1924," 30–1, Archives of the Milwaukee University School; see also Max Griebsch, "Das Nationale Lehrerseminar zu Milwaukee," *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht* 22 (1930):97–103.
44. See "Board of Directors. Milwaukee University School. Minute Book 6/1920–11/1925," 230–2, and "Board of Trustees. Milwaukee University School. Minutes of Meetings. July 1925–Dec. 1931," 3, 5, Archives of the Milwaukee University School; for the biography of Max Griebsch, see Voigt, *The Engelmann Heritage,* 33; for that of his successor, Alfred Lawrence Hall-Quest, see *Who's Who in America* 15 (1928–9):943.
45. *Milwaukee University School 1928–1929* (Milwaukee, 1928), 18; for the arguments of opponents to German-language instruction in the grades, see, e.g., "Skrapnel in Talk on the Needs of the Schools," *Evening Wisconsin,* May 26, 1917.