Education for Victory: Pre-Induction Training at Austin High School

Whitney G. Blankenship
University of Texas

Abstract

In the months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States began the difficult task of mobilizing the nation for war. Every facet of American life would be touched as the country threw all of her resources into the war effort. American schools were no different from any other sector of the U.S. Home Front. One of those schools, Austin High School, would implement the Victory Corps and pre-induction training at a startling level, taking to heart the governments rallying call of "Education for Victory."

In the months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States began the difficult task of mobilizing the nation for war. Every facet of American life would be touched as the country threw all of her resources into the war effort. American schools were no different from any other sector of the U.S. Home Front. Almost immediately, schools rallied behind the war effort collecting scrap iron and saving pennies to buy war bonds. At the high school level, mobilization would be even more radical, particularly once Congress began debating lowering the draft age from twenty to eighteen in 1942. Soon after, it was determined that pre-induction training at the high school level was a necessity if the armed services were to continue to train and put soldiers into combat in anything close to the numbers needed for a U.S. victory over the Axis powers. In 1942, the U.S. Department of Education began publicizing pre-induction training for high school students and a few months later the Victory Corps were established to help facilitate the process. Almost as soon as the Victory Corps were announced in Washington, D.C., the state education departments and schools across the U.S. began the process of mobilizing and training their high school populations. In Texas, the State Superintendent, L.A. Woods, began working with federal Office of Education officials, University of Texas faculty and local school officials to mobilize the schools in Texas. One of those schools, Austin High School, would implement the Victory Corps and pre-induction training at a startling level, taking to heart the governments rallying call of "Education for Victory."

The Need for Pre-Induction Training

Within two weeks of the bombing of Pearl Harbor the Office of Education Wartime Commission was formed. It was divided into two committees, one responsible for Higher Education and the other responsible for state and local education agencies. Goals for the committee included requiring state and local education agencies at all levels to help adjust to war time needs, informing the federal government agencies responsible for the war effort of ways in which schools and universities could be enlisted in the war effort and finally, analyzing the effects of all proposed changes on the educational system. Within eight months a second committee, the National Institute on Education and the War was created specifically to recruit schools into the war effort, a long-overdue decision, as public school officials had been flooding the U.S. Office of Education with requests for guidance on

mobilizing for the war effort (Smith 1944; Ugland 1979).

In August of 1942, the National Institute on Education and the War held a conference in Washington, D.C. to discuss the issue of pre-induction training at the university and high school levels. The meeting was attended by officials from the U.S. Office of Education and representatives of the U.S. War Department and the War Manpower Commission. It was at this meeting that the military pressed for the establishment of pre-induction training throughout the secondary schools and colleges of the nation. The assembled public servants were addressed by a number of individuals representing each of the departments, including U.S. Commissioner of Education, John W. Studebaker. Lieutenant General Brehon B.Somervell, Commanding General, Services of Supply, War Department also addressed the assembly. Studebaker opened the conference noting that schools, particularly high schools, could not continue with "business as usual" but must be fully integrated into the war effort. He argued that the needs of the military would call on the active service of most men between the ages of 18 and 45 and therefore it was vital for high school boys to begin military training well before graduation (Studebaker 1942; *NY Times* 1942; Mallon 1942).

Lt. General Somervell painted an even bleaker picture in his address to the conference. He began his remarks by stating that the army of 1942 was built on specializations. Indeed, sixty-three out of every one hundred men called to service would be assigned to specialized training. He went on to add that the army was unlikely to get the specialists it needed because there were not enough men who understood the fundamentals of electricity, auto mechanics or radio communications. He backed up his dire predictions with the previous year's induction statistics. Out of every 300,000 men inducted, 4689 were needed who had specialized training in radio communications; the military got 135. From that same 300,000, 4501 medical technicians were needed, but only 166 were available. Combined with shortages in other specialized areas, the army experienced a net shortage of 838,040 men out of an army of 4,000,000. In addition, more than 200,000 men had already been rejected due to illiteracy. The army took on the additional task of training men in their specializations in an attempt to overcome the shortage. The problem was that they simple could not train men quickly enough. In response, he called upon schools to take up some of the burden of training by concentrating on the fundamental concepts of aeronautics, electricity and radio, along with other vital specializations needed by the army. It was imperative that schools take on this role "regardless of cost, time, inconvenience, the temporary sidetracking of non-war objectives, or even the temporary scrapping of peacetime courses." Schools must take on the role of induction center "leaving the armed forces free to train men in the combat application of the training" received while in high school (Somervell 1942; Smith 1944).

The concerns of the military expressed by Lt. General Somervell at the conference were not unknown to Commissioner Studebaker. Robert A. Lovett, Assistant Secretary of War for Air, warned the commissioner that pre-flight training and conditioning was rapidly becoming a necessity. The Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, and the Director of the War Manpower Commission, Paul McNutt, seconded Lovett's opinion. According to their estimates, 80 percent of the 1.3 million boys currently enrolled in high schools would be heading into service upon graduation, and the other 20 percent, deemed

unfit, would be entering war industries. All three men felt that it would be a disservice to these young men not to attempt to prepare them for what lay ahead. Physical conditioning was not the only concern of military leaders. Admiral Chester Nimitz, Chief of the United States' Navy Bureau of Navigation, added his concerns over the state of mathematics education in an address at the University of Michigan in October 1941 (two months *before* the United States' became officially involved in the war). He issued his remarks in a summary and article that became known as the "Nimitz Letter" that had appeared in *Mathematics Teacher* and *American Mathematical Monthly.* In his remarks, Nimitz noted that there was a sixty percent failure rate on the mathematics test required for entry into the Naval Reserves. Additionally, 3,000 out of the 8,000 college graduates who had applied for admissions to the commissioning program failed the entrance exam, and he attributed 75 percent of the failures in navigation courses to deficiencies in mathematics (Ugland 1979; Caswell 1943; Garrett 1999).

Military concerns were not the sole driving force behind the push for pre-induction training in American high schools. By the summer of 1942, the U.S. Congress was considering lowering the draft age from twenty to eighteen in an effort to increase the number of soldiers trained and in the field. As part of the debate over the lowering of the draft age, an amendment to the draft bill was added in November of 1942 requiring the military to train all eighteen and nineteen-year-old draftees for a minimum of one year before being sent overseas. For a military already greatly overextended in their ability to train recruits, this was yet another obstacle to getting a large and well-trained force quickly into the field. Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, argued that this would put "severe shackles on the war effort" by throwing off the War Department's combat plans, and would force the War Department to call up a larger group of men from the upper end of the draft age to fill the military's needs in the field. Pre-induction training of younger potential draftees—while they were still in high school—could potentially preclude the need for the full year of training called for in the amendment and allow the military to meet its recruitment and training goals (*Austin American Statesman* 1942).

Although military concerns were probably the most influential in getting pre-induction training into American high schools, there were calls for the mobilization of school children in general, and high school students in particular, from other sources. Educators at high schools across the country were concerned with the number of students who chose to drop out of school, usually to go to work in defense industries or to go into the military. In the 1940-1941 school-year the Office of Education reported a high school enrollment of 6,714,000 students, which represented a 1.7 percent increase in students over the previous year. However, those numbers dropped during the first full year of the war to 6,496,000. By the 1942-1943 school year, high school enrollment had dropped 7 percent below the 1940 population to 6,142,000. The majority of these losses, according the Office of Education's circular report, were boys (7.4 percent, as opposed to a dropout rate of 4.4 percent for girls). Schools in the largest cities lost more than 8 percent of their high school boys and 5 percent of high school girls between October 1941 and October 1942 (Agency 1943). Schools were trying to convince students to complete their educations, but they had a hard time competing with the allure of "doing something" for the war effort. As one young man from Indianapolis stated, " . . .merely to dream of shooting a gun or

diving in a plane at unsuspecting Japs while learning of past . . .things will be harder to do than face . . .death itself" (Ugland 1979). High schools simply could not compete with the excitement of war. Educators began writing letters to the Office of Education asking for guidance on training boys for military service and retaining students (Ugland 1979).

Pre-Induction Training Curriculum

The needs of the armed forces combined with the requests of educators led to the introduction of pre-induction training into American high schools in early 1942. The goals of pre-induction training were to aid the progress of the war, aid in the preliminary training needed for post-induction training, aid armed services personnel in their ability to wage a modern war, and to help students gain the discipline, skills, knowledge and conditioning needed for success in post-induction training or wartime work. Despite the government's stated goals, there continued to be a great deal of confusion over what exactly would constitute pre-induction training. Some schools wished to replace physical education classes with military drill instruction, while the American Council of Science Teachers originally suggested that all boys take physics and math because of its importance to aviation (Mallon 1942; Hayes 1953; Giordano 2004; Jones 1943).

Soon after the decision to include pre-induction training was made, the War Department, Navy Department, Department of Commerce, Civil Aeronautics Authority and the Wartime Commission on Education joined together to create the National Policy Committee to direct the necessary curriculum changes. The committee worked with educators to compose a curriculum to be used in pre-induction training based on the armed forces own training manuals. The completed work was enthusiastically endorsed by each of the participating agencies and the armed forces (Ugland 1979). Major Ralph C. Wenrich of the Civilian Pre-Induction Training Branch commented that, "With the lowering of the induction age to 18, the Army must look to the secondary schools to provide the foundation on which to build post-induction training. In order to assist the schools in meeting the urgent needs of the Army and those young men who will soon be soldiers, the War Department through its Civilian Pre-Induction Training Branch has defined those needs which may be met wholly or in part by the schools" (Weinrich 1942).

The curriculum published by the Office of Education included extensive course outlines for five major areas of study: Fundamentals of Electricity, Fundamentals of Machines, Fundamentals of Shop Work, Fundamentals of Automotive Mechanics, and Fundamentals of Radio. In addition to these vocational courses, pre-Flight Aeronautics, physical conditioning, and Pre-Induction Driver's Education were also included. The emphasis was not on creating new courses or series of courses, but adapting the regular curriculum to wartime needs. Each course covered the basic theory and skills needed by future inductees to succeed in post-induction specialization courses, and was organized into three general units of study for each course: skills (what students should be able to do), theory (what students should know), and characteristics students should develop in order to be successful in the areas of specialization. However, the course outlines were just that, outlines. The committee spent little time developing the curriculum as they assumed that changes would be made over time, although the curriculum was strictly limited to those skills identified by the armed forces as necessary (Smith 1944; Hayes 1953; *Vocational Trends* 1943).

To make up for the absence of a detailed curriculum, the Office of Education in conjunction with the War Department published numerous bulletins and pamphlets designed to aid schools in the implementation of pre-induction courses. The earliest pamphlets highlighted the goals of pre-induction courses and provided a breakdown of the areas of responsibility for pre-induction training at the federal, state, and local levels. In keeping with the idea of local control, the federal government did not specify methods to be used, but rather made suggestions from which school officials could choose. Pamphlets published later also included checklists for administrators to use when setting up a pre-induction program of study. The Office of Education also produced a bi-weekly publication *Education for Victory* that included articles related to pre-induction training, information on additions, changes in the curriculum, lists of suggested audio-visuals, textbook recommendations, and training institutes for teachers. Considering the vast amount of confusion about what constituted pre-induction training, these publications helped clarify the definition of pre-induction training for school officials while offering concrete guidance on materials and content (*Education for Victory*, September 1943; *Education for Victory*, October 1943; *Education for Victory*, December 1943; War Department 1943; War Department 1944).

The pre-induction courses were more than just broad introductions to the course material; they were often highly specialized and technical in nature and required, in some cases, advanced math skills. The *New York Times* reported that many schools were replacing traditional subjects with specific pre-induction technical courses, and that schools were increasingly emphasizing science and physics as well. The article also notes that aviation training was prevalent at all levels of schooling, but that it had become particularly prominent in high schools. Pre-flight training programs and pre-flight aeronautics were gaining ground in schools across the nation. In these specialized courses students learned instrumentation and gliding, as well as air to ground communications, teletype operation and meteorology. Physics and mathematics classes emphasized problems related to modern warfare, such as navigation and plotting artillery fire. The Office of Education published materials for students to use in pre-flight classes that would help them learn to identify the various airplanes used by the military. Students in automotive mechanics classes concentrated on learning how to repair specific military vehicles, rather than the family car. Pre-Induction Driver Education classes were required to learn the specifications of military vehicles, along with the ins-and-outs of driving in a convoy and military map reading. The Fundamentals of Radio classes included maintenance and repair alongside Morse code. This change in emphasis throughout the high school curriculum is consistent with Commissioner Studebaker's claim that math, science and physical conditioning should take precedence over English, foreign languages, and social studies. These traditional subjects were not completely abandoned, but they became secondary to the main curricular goal of preparing students for military service (Fine 1942; Giordano 2004; Barger 1943; Quartermaster General 1943; *Vocational Trends*, April 1943; Ugland 1979).

The High School Victory Corps

By early 1943, nearly 2.25 million boys had completed pre-induction courses at their high school. Young men completing pre-induction coursework were considered ready for advanced work in army specialization courses. They also received guidance on the induction process, army

organization, and military procedures; they were now ready to serve in the armed forces of the United States upon graduation. *Vocational Trends,* a journal for teachers of vocational courses, reported that out of 1,373,377 prospective inductees currently in high school in 1943, over 100,000 had completed coursework in electricity and shop work, and nearly as many had completed training in radio, machines, and automotive mechanics. In addition, 191,576 were involved in pre-induction Aeronautics and another 909,899 were enrolled in physical conditioning. These numbers were certainly helped by the introduction of the High School Victory Corps in late 1942. The Victory Corps was created by the Office of Education as a way to help schools organize the mobilization of their student bodies and efficiently move students into appropriate pre-induction courses (*Vocational Trends,* September 1943; NY Times 1942).

The Victory Corps was voluntary, and school administrators (as well as individual students) could determine how involved they wished to be in the program. Schools jumped at the chance to establish Victory Corps. One school superintendent noted in a memo to principals that, "Its chief value lies in its excellent provision for individual guidance by 'channeling' efforts toward a definite goal" (Studebaker 1943). Apparently, other school officials agreed; 53.2 percent of schools across the nation participated in the program, and the Office of Education estimated that by 1943, 70 percent of all high schools were participating. Schools in Texas were no exception. Although pre-induction classes were already in place in many Texas' schools, the establishment of the Victory Corps brought new life to the program, as state and local officials began the task of fine tuning and adding to the existing pre-induction programs under the Victory Corps mantel (Ugland 1979).

Pre-Induction Training on the Local Level: Austin High School

Local officials throughout the state began looking for ways to mobilize their student populations, while at the same time preventing students from dropping out to work. Austin Independent School District in Austin, Texas was no different. Within one month of the U.S. entrance into World War II, Austin I.S.D. had already established a public evening-school that would allow adults to earn high school credits while continuing to work. The classes met on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings, three hours each night for twelve weeks. The classes were tuition-free; however, the district did charge a $1.50 registration fee. All classes would meet at Austin High School, be taught by Austin High teachers, and would include both commercial and academic subjects. However, night schools were only just the beginning. Since they were primarily aimed at working age adults, additional changes would be necessary to the curriculum of traditional high school students. By late spring, the Board of Education announced that Austin High School would teach pre-flight aeronautics and aviation, as well as classes in metalworking. By September of 1942, the *Austin-American Statesman* was reporting that high school shops would convert to twenty-four hour establishments. This would allow traditional high school students to use the shops during the day and the adult education classes to use them in the evenings (*Austin American Statesman*, January 1942). Interestingly, Austin I.S.D.'s African-American high school, Anderson, was not mentioned in the discussion regarding pre-induction training.

At Austin High School, teachers and administrators looked for ways to keep students engaged in school as their contribution to the war

effort. For many students "business as usual" in school did not satisfy their longing to help the war effort. Many students were lured into the work force by the worker shortage and high wages offered. School must have seemed like a very dull place compared to working and earning money or fighting on foreign fields. Austin High students were not immune to these feelings of restlessness. In an effort to convince students that staying in school was their best choice, school officials brought Mrs. Grace Sloan Overton to speak on war issues to student leaders. In her address, Mrs. Overton encouraged boys to stay in school as long as possible, to go to college if they could, even if it meant having to leave for overseas duty before they had finished their course of study. She also acknowledged that the decision to lower the draft age made sense economically and sociologically. She reasoned that young men of eighteen or nineteen would be less likely to leave behind an economic hole in a family or industry because young men had fewer connections than older draftees did. Furthermore, by staying in school and completing their pre-induction training, boys would be more likely to get the specialization they wanted once inducted into the armed services. Acknowledging the need for young men in the armed services, while at the same time appealing to students' self-interest by emphasizing the connection between high school coursework and the ability to "choose" their specialization once inducted, Mrs. Overton attempted to alleviate some of the impatience felt by the students. Her advice was similar to that given by others at the time (*Austin Maroon*, November 1942).

An article in *Vocational Trends* in January of 1942 reminded students that staying in school was vital because World War II was a specialists' war. The article argues that specialists' jobs go first to those who are already trained in that area; therefore, staying in school and taking pre-induction coursework was the best way to get the specialization of your choice, rather than being assigned a specialization by the army. Similar arguments were made by representatives of the armed forces (*Vocational Trends*, September 1942). Other publications emphasized the importance of specialized training in a modern war and reminded students that, "You are in school now, rather than in the armed forces or at work only because Uncle Sam believes that you will be a more useful war worker after you have had more training. You are *on loan* to your school until you are prepared for a war job (Spencer 1943)." If appealing to self-interest did not work, then perhaps reminding students that school did not last forever and that they would be even more valuable to the war effort would raise retention and participation in pre-induction programs.

By the fall term of 1942, Austin High School was awash in pre-induction courses. The school newspaper, the *Austin Maroon*, reported that, whereas most high schools only offered one or two pre-induction classes, Austin High School would offer all of the courses suggested by the army. Although a number of courses were already in place, Superintendent Dr. Russell Lewis reported to the Board of Education in January of 1943 that additional courses would be added to achieve this goal: Navigation, Radio 1, aircraft drafting and automotive mechanics(Minutes of the Austin Independent School District Board of Education 1943). These courses along with those already offered (such as Physical Education and typing) would round out the program. This was an impressive goal given that by the fall of 1942 the suggested course list had expanded to include Code Practice and Touch Typing, Army Clerical Procedures and Pre-Induction Driver Education, Pre-Flight Aeronautics, Fundamentals of Electricity, Machines, Shop-work, and Radio and

Automotive Repair. The list would grow even longer with the establishment of the Victory Corps at Austin High (Austin Maroon 1942; *Vocational Trends*, December 1942). Although it is unclear whether AHS was able to meet their lofty goal, the wide array of course offerings reported to the school board suggests that the district came close to meeting its lofty goal.

In November of 1942, the Superintendent of Austin I.S.D., Russell A. Lewis, announced that the Victory Corps was on its way to Austin High School. Although no definitive plans had been made at the time of the announcement, Lewis expected the Victory Corps to resemble the organizational outline set forth by Dr. John Lund of the U.S. Office of Education at a meeting of state educators earlier in the year. Under the Victory Corps banner, pre-induction training would be reorganized to fit into the five divisions of Air, Land, Sea, Production, and Community Service. New courses would be brought in and older courses would be revamped to emphasize the war effort. Physical fitness classes were already in place, but would be reorganized to better fit the Victory Corps model. A specialized guidance program would also be instituted to inform students of critical manpower needs, including the armed services. Other areas of concentration were to include first aid training, military drill instruction (only for students who were in ROTC), and increasing competence in science and math. Membership in the Victory Corps (specifically in the Air, Land and Sea divisions) would require students to pass rigid examinations and physical fitness courses. In adopting the Victory Corps, Austin High School was similar to many urban high schools during the war. As a voluntary program, urban schools were more likely to be able to provide teachers with the necessary experience for the vocational courses and urban schools, with their larger populations, were also more likely to have a demand for the expanded training opportunities provided by the Victory Corps (*Austin Maroon*, December 1942; Ugland 1979).

Once the announcement was made, a committee of teachers and administration officials was created specifically to look into the Victory Corps program and make recommendations for implementation at Austin High School. These recommendations would need to include curriculum revisions to physical education, math, and home economics courses. The committee members worked with Superintendent Lewis and T. N. Porter who were in charge of the local public education war effort program. Committee members included George H. Wells, principal of Austin High School, W.A. Guinn, assistant principal, T.B. Barnette, coordinator of science, Addison Lee, head of the biology department, Sam L. Martin, coordinator of industrial education, Mrs. Gladys Hudnall, head of the homemaking department, Mrs. Florence Richer, a home economics teacher, Miss Irene Randerson, a math teacher, Miss Cicely Goff, head of the math department, Standard Lambert, head of boys' physical education, and Miss Vivian Liddell, head of girls' physical education. The development of the Austin High Victory Corps program was not going to be a top-down implementation, but would include input from the people who would be running the program on a day-to-day basis. Many of members of the committee would also take on leading rolls within the organizational structure of the Victory Corps once it was in place. The work that the committee put in throughout December 1942 would allow the committee to adapt the federal recommendations to Austin High's particular needs. Specifically, the school would be organized under a military system with both voluntary and compulsory membership. The majority of students would be

involved in the general membership category, with others joining the ranks of the Land, Sea, and Air divisions. The only compulsory part of the program was physical education (*Austin American Statesman,* December 1942; *Austin Maroon,* December 1942).

The committee continued to work throughout the rest of December and into January. Although a final decision on the Victory Corps was expected by December 9, committee members were reluctant to name a date for the beginning of the program, although they hoped to have it in place by the beginning of the spring term. Additional experts from the Office of Education had been brought in as consultants to the December 9 meeting to address issues related to the development of the physical education course of study. It is likely that Austin High School physical education teachers would have attended the institute held at the University of Texas earlier in the year, and were familiar with the armed services' methods of teaching physical training. Bringing in additional consultants suggests that the committee planned to expand Austin High's physical education program, or at least adapt it so that teachers would be more efficient in serving the large numbers of students who would be required to take physical education (*Austin Maroon,* December 1942).

Despite the delays, the committee finished its work in time for the Victory Corps to be in place for the beginning of the spring term in 1943. Miss Liddell, a member of the committee, was appointed head of the Victory Corps fitness classes. In addition to the new fitness classes that were required of all Austin High students, Aircraft Drafting was offered for the first time. The drafting class was deemed suitable for students who planned to go into some branch of aircraft design or construction. Navigation was also offered by the math department. Aeronautics had been put into place the previous fall and was already a rousing success. It, along with the other pre-induction courses, would follow the guidelines and course outlines provided by the Office of Education and War Department. Miss Liddell stated that, "There is a place for every student in the Victory Corps, and by next fall a majority of the student body should be wearing branch service insignia." She estimated that there should be about a thousand applications for general membership based on the size of the fitness classes. Within weeks of the beginning of the term the governing committee, made up of faculty members, was formed and rules for membership were established (*Austin Maroon*, February 1943; *Victory Corps*, February 1943).

Austin High's Victory Corps program was by all accounts a successful program. Based on the fitness classes, it seems the majority of the student body participated in one form or another. If Austin High followed national trends some twenty-two percent of the eligible students were enrolled in pre-induction programs one year after the Victory Corps began. According to an Office of Education survey, slightly more than half of the students who participated were enrolled in the general membership, 10 percent in community service and the rest divided between the air, land, sea, and production divisions. The survey also indicated that girls joined in equal numbers to boys, although officially they were discouraged from joining the service divisions because it was thought they would be a distraction to the boys and would interfere with instruction. But, it is also likely that Austin High School beat the national statistics. The fact that it offered all of the pre-induction courses available would surely attract a number of students with a wide range of interests. In schools with only one or two pre-induction classes, students who were not interested in electricity or shopwork would most

likely not have participated in those programs. Indeed, the *Austin Maroon* reported that by the end of March the Industrial Department at Austin High reached an all time high enrollment of 932 students! The department offered thirty-nine shop courses and twenty-one drawing courses, including courses in printing, mechanical and architectural drawing, along with the traditional pre-induction classes. This suggests that students participated at higher rates than students at other schools (*Austin Maroon,* February 1943; Ugland 1979; *Austin Maroon*, March 1943).

Although the variety of classes offered most likely played a role in the numbers of students who participated in pre-induction training, another equally enticing draw was the equipment available to students, and the hands-on learning opportunities presented as a result. Sam Martin, the department head, told the *Austin Maroon* that equipment in the shops represented between 80 and 90 thousand dollars and was the finest available. This equipment represents either a sizable outlay of capital by the Austin Independent School District or a large number of donations from the community, as the federal government had made it very clear that training devices and materials would not be supplied by the government or armed forces, and schools would have to work with what they had. The fact that the equipment was put in place by the school district—whether through specific appropriations or by soliciting donations—indicates a commitment by the district to the success of pre-induction programs. The ability to use the shops for the evening classes in addition to the high school classes provided an additional incentive for the district to make the effort to set up well-equipped classrooms. From the student's point of view, the ability to train on the latest equipment would give them an edge over their peers once they left school. The hands-on method of training allowed students to cover three years worth of work in two years. Beginning "real" work early on in the class would also be attractive to students, and would have the side benefit of helping students feel they were learning something that was beneficial to the war—a feeling that was most likely not shared with more traditional courses such as English or Social Studies. Since retention of students was one of the reasons for the implementation of pre-induction training, it would seem that in this respect Austin High School could be said to have established a successful program (*Austin Maroon*, March 1943).

The shop classes were not the only successful part of the pre-induction program at Austin High School. The aeronautics class introduced in the fall of 1942 was especially popular among boys, and participation in the pre-flight program grew. This is not surprising considering the romantic notions many young men had about the excitement and glamour of being a pilot. By the end of 1942 the Army, Navy, and Marines needed 100,000 cadet trainees, and it was estimated that even more would be needed in 1943. Any young man who wished to qualify for flight training was advised to begin preparation while still in high school. The pre-flight program required potential recruits to take a physical before entering the Air Division of the Victory Corps, thus ensuring that they met the minimum physical requirements set up by the armed services. The full course required a year of physics and three years of math, completion of the pre-flight aeronautics class, auto mechanics, radio, electricity or other courses that would prepare students to repair, service, and maintain air craft, and continued participation in a physical fitness program and military drill. Guidelines published in educational bulletins emphasized that the courses should be taught as late in the

program as possible due to their difficulty (*Austin Maroon,* March 1943; *Vocational Trends,* October 1942; Curtis 1942; Hannah 1943).

The success of this program is indicated by the fact that sixty Austin High students were admitted to a pre-induction program sponsored by the Civilian Air Patrol Unit in October of 1943. To qualify students must be in the last two years of high school and would train at the municipal airport. They would complete coursework related to meteorology, navigation, radio, aircraft, engine maintenance, and the fundamentals and regulations of flying. Civil Aviation Patrol volunteers taught all classes. Young men who were past seventeen years of age were placed in the Army Air Corps Enlisted Reserves, allowing them to be immediately placed into aviation cadet training upon turning eighteen. It is unclear whether the program was considered part of the Austin High pre-flight program or was an ancillary program outside of the school day. This program closely followed the guidelines set out by the Texas State Department of Education, including the opportunity to gain hands-on flight experience if time allowed, so it is possible that the program was provided for especially talented and mature young men over and above the normal aeronautics class. Another explanation might involve the lack of teachers with aeronautics training. By utilizing the volunteer instructors of the Civilian Air Patrol, the school would get expert teachers, and students would receive more in-depth training than they might otherwise have had. As with most things, the truth is probably a combination of these two explanations. In any case, the selection of these young men to participate in such an advanced program hints at the success of the pre-aeronautics courses at Austin High School (*Austin Maroon,* October 1943; Woods 1943; Ugland 1979).

After the 1942-1943 school year, references to the Victory Corps or to pre-induction classes at Austin High School disappear. Although it can be assumed that the programs continued until the end of the war, it is likely that public and, to some extent, student interest waned after the initial successes of the program. By the end of 1943, the tide of the war had changed and Americans were no longer afraid of total defeat as the invasions of Africa and Italy made front-page news. Under Studebaker, the Office of Education continued to request additional appropriations from Congress to fund the Victory Corps and pre-induction training, although the funding rarely came through. The change in the worldview coupled with the lack of sufficient funding led to a decrease in interest on the part of the public. Students who were once enthusiastically joining in lost their enthusiasm as the novelty of the program wore off. As Allied victory became more certain the program continued to weaken. The Office of Education figures show a seventy percent decline in participation among school districts in urban areas (Ugland 1979).

By 1944, the Victory Corps section of *Education for Victory* was cut and pre-induction training, along with the Victory Corps, was considered a dying program. Schools and students were beginning to look to the future and a world after the current conflict. Some elements of the pre-induction program were carried over into the new post-war world; for example, the aeronautics course was changed to Aviation Education in Texas with the stated goal of preparing students to live in the "Age of the Air." For the most part, however, by 1944 "Education for Victory" had been replaced by education for the future (Ugland 1979; Woods 1943).

Afterward: Questions and Considerations

Although Austin High School seems to have had a typical response to the war, it was atypical in other ways, such as the number of pre-induction classes and the number of students participating in Victory Corps. Due to the fragmentary nature of the records currently available, a number of questions remain. A more detailed account of the committee deliberations tasked with adapting the Victory Corps curriculum to Austin High School would help answer questions regarding the difficulties (or lack thereof) of adapting the federal program to Austin High's particular situation. For instance, Military Drill was part of the national guidelines recommended for Victory Corps' schools. However, drill was always very controversial; many people felt it was a little too close to the Hitler Youth and would undermine democratic values. Others believed that in order for the U.S. to win the war, our students must be immersed in the same type of militaristic culture as the enemy. Did the committee run into problems over the decision to include military drill? And, if so, how were those problems overcome? Another question concerns the validity of the claim that Austin High offered all the pre-induction classes. This could be checked with access to student and/or school records. The participation levels of students would also be helpful in determining how successful the Austin High program was when compared to schools and districts of similar size. The Victory Corps coordinator, Miss Liddell, estimated that there would be approximately one thousand applications for general membership, but figures for the other divisions have not been found. A more complete picture of the Austin High pre-induction program might be obtained through interviews with former students as well as access to school and district records from the time period (Ugland 1979).

A secondary story is that of the teachers who made the Victory Corps and pre-induction training possible at Austin High School. At a time when there was a severe teacher shortage due to the number of people being drafted or leaving education to work in war industries, Austin High School seems to have been relatively stable. What difficulties did the district face in finding qualified teachers for the pre-induction classes? What adaptations had to be made to the program when no qualified teacher could be found for the more technical classes? What was the turnover rate during the war years? Often the success or failure of a program is dependent on the teachers who implement it in the classroom. Being able to answer the questions related to faculty participation would provide a more well-rounded picture of the overall success of pre-induction classes at Austin High School (Giordano 2004; *Educational Digest* 1942; *Vocational Trends*, January 1942).

For the most part, the federal government did not fund pre-induction and Victory Corps programs. All monies were expected to come from the district, and schools were encouraged to adapt the courses they already offered to pre-induction guidelines as far as they could. The extent of Austin High's program suggests a large financial commitment to the idea of pre-induction training. But, exactly how much money was allocated to Austin High School's program, and how much went into the evening school program for adults? Did the two programs operate on separate budgets? Did one receive a larger appropriation than the other? Since Austin High's teachers were also teachers in the evening program, and since the well equipped shops were used by both high school and adult students, it would seem that there would be at least some overlap in budgets. In addition, the two different programs may also have affected the extent of

community donations to the program. How much of the equipment was donated by area businesses? Were there any strings attached to the donations, such as requiring the Austin High shops be used for training war workers in the evenings?

Another problem associated with the two programs is the degree to which the evening program increased or decreased participation in the Austin High pre-induction classes. Given that one of the goals of including pre-induction training at the high school level was to keep students in school, did the availability of night classes (which counted toward a diploma) pull students out of full time schooling and into full time war jobs? Or, did Austin High students use the evening program as another way to accelerate their training, while still allowing them the flexibility of working part time?

Finally, Austin High School was the district's White school. There is no mention of pre-induction programs at Anderson, the district's Black high school. Were pre-induction classes a part of the curriculum at Anderson? If so, what classes were offered and how were they funded? If not, were black students allowed to attend the evening school? In what ways did the Anderson faculty and administration mobilize their students?

The story of pre-induction training within the Austin Independent School district in general, and Austin High School specifically, has only been partially explored in this paper. The availability of only fragmentary evidence and lack of access to district and school records leaves us with an incomplete picture. The questions that remain, if answered, will help to further our understanding of the war years in Austin, Texas and its impact on the students of Austin High School.

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