

nearly one-half of the candidates for Standard IV failed at the late examination proves that the children have not had the work sufficiently drilled into them, or that the teachers, having formed too light an estimate of the requirements, have not placed sufficient work before them. From what I have seen I am inclined to attribute the weakness to the latter cause, and, fully impressed with the importance of the work at this point, when so many children leave their education unfinished, I trust that both Standards III. and IV. will receive more attention in the future.

The following table shows the percentages made in each subject for the whole district.—

—	Reading.	Writing.	Spelling.	Arithmetic.	Grammar.	Geography.	History.
Standard VI. ..	97·6	100	97·6	61·9	76·2	90·4	85·7
Standard V ...	96	100	77·2	52·3	67·6	79	88·5
Standard IV. ..	90·4	99·7	76·4	54·5	66	60·4	73·2
Standard III.	89·8	96·2	85·5	76·2	71·2	61·2	53·4
Standard II. ...	83·5	95·2	83·3	82·7	..	69·6	..
Standard I.	88·2	94·5	86·1	82·5	..	..	..
Totals ..	89·3	96·6	83·7	72·6	69·2	68	68·7

READING.—On the whole, this subject is well attended to. The articulation is distinct, and the words are deliberately uttered, especially so in some of the large schools. In Timaru School the reading of the girls could hardly be surpassed. In a few schools, however, to which attention has been drawn in the individual reports, the pupils frequently drop the “h” and the final consonants, and read too rapidly. If the teachers of these schools will distinguish between rapidity and fluency in reading, and check the two faults mentioned, the reading in itself would be satisfactory. I believe a change in the class-books is desirable. The present books have been so long in use that the pupils, especially in the lower standards, are too well acquainted with the narratives, and in many instances are able to continue the lesson without reference to the book. Another fault is that a knowledge of the sense to be conveyed by the sentences is not sufficiently cultivated. Although the children can read off the lesson, and even continue the text without the book, they can give very little explanation of the words they have read or repeated, or give the subject-matter in their own language. Intelligent reading is as necessary as fluent reading, and more attention may well be paid to secure it.

WRITING.—This subject is satisfactory, but may be improved if it is made a lesson, instead of being a mere practice. The black-board should be freely used, and the pupils should be well acquainted with the names of the component parts of the letters, so that the teacher may readily draw attention to the faults in formation. The copybooks should be carefully preserved, and retained in the school until the inspection is over. In many instances there were only one or two pages of the copybooks written up, with no finished books to fall back upon, which, of course, gave hardly sufficient work to judge from.

SPELLING.—This subject is also satisfactory in most of the schools while the words of the reading-book only are given, but with test-words taken from other sources it is faulty. There is no doubt that the eye is the chief means by which spelling is taught, and that the pupils require to see the words before they can depend upon spelling them. The teacher should therefore bring the words used in ordinary conversation, but not found in the reading-book, before the pupils, by introducing a few well-selected test-words into each dictation exercise. Thus the eye may soon be accustomed not only to the words in common use, but also to the more difficult words of the language. A record of all errors made at each dictation lesson should be kept by the teacher, and the words should be dictated again and again until the pupils are thoroughly acquainted with them.

ARITHMETIC.—In Standards I., II., and III. arithmetic was very well presented, and the requirements of the syllabus were fully complied with. In Standards IV and V there was great weakness. In some schools the whole of the candidates in Standard IV. failed, and in addition to its incorrectness the work was done in a slovenly manner. The syllabus is very clear in this standard, so it should be no great difficulty for teachers to prepare their pupils for a reasonable examination. I attribute the low percentage this standard has made in arithmetic to the low estimate the teachers have formed of the requirements. In Standard VI. the work was hardly satisfactory, but generally it was neatly presented. At this advanced stage the pupils should not be kept so closely to mere rules, but should be exercised often in miscellaneous work. Very little attention appears to be given to mental arithmetic.

GRAMMAR.—A large number of the passes made in grammar and composition were weak, and, taken altogether, the subjects are unsatisfactory. Too much time appears to be devoted to learning from books, and too little to the drawing-out of information from the pupils. There is full scope here for inductive teaching. It should first be seen that the pupil has a correct idea of the functions of a word before he is allowed to parse it. In Standards III. and IV. the children appear to classify the words almost at random. The word “that” in its conjunctive sense was generally parsed “a pronoun,” and the word “nothing” was more frequently an adverb than any other classification. The use of a little book by Abbott, entitled “How to Tell,” would tend, I think, to take away this weakness. The same want of discernment of function exists in the analysis of sentences in the upper standards, and, with few exceptions, very little method was displayed. The most intelligent work was done at Wai-iti and Pleasant Point. In very few schools were the compositions at all creditable, and yet, by the reproduction of almost every lesson, the pupils’ powers of construction may be exercised several times a week, in addition to the regular instruction