

Additional Subjects.

| Drill and Exercises. | Singing.      | Needlework. | Mean Result. | Mean Result of all Subjects. |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Good.                | Satisfactory. | Very good.  | Good.        | Satisfactory.                |

TABLE C.—SHOWING THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE SCHOOLS ACCORDING TO EFFICIENCY.

| —                     | Weak. | Fair. | Satisfactory. | Good. | Very good. |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|---------------|-------|------------|
| Number of schools ... | 2     | 25    | 97            | 97    | 1          |

The average efficiency of the schools is much more accurately shown by the results in Tables B and C than by the percentage column of Table A. To be classed as “satisfactory” a subject or a school must have received at least 60 per cent. of the possible marks. The mean percentage of all the subjects is 64·5, and is nearer “good” than “satisfactory.” This shows conclusively that the schools of the district are in an efficient condition. At one time we anticipated a higher result ; but the schools, especially in the large centres, had a year of unrest and distraction, and the continuity of the work was frequently broken by holidays, which in some instances absorbed one-fourth of the whole year. At the evening study-table, and even at the school-desk, the newspaper with its war cables and commentaries took the place of the history-book ; its maps, pictures, and descriptive paragraphs took the place of the geography-book. Teachers seized the opportunity to give to history and geography a realism which, in the school course, they have seldom possessed. New Zealand boys, whose names are in the school registers, and who had learned their first drill in the school playgrounds, were continuing the work of Clive and Wolfe. They had gone to meet “foemen worthy of their steel,” who, if not “sons of the sea,” were sons of the seamen and burghers who gave to the mighty Spanish Empire the first of the shocks which have brought her to her present living death, and who, but for Blake and his gallant crews, would have checkmated England herself in her almost unconscious movements towards expansion. South Africa, with its settlement, climate, and resources ; its ports, roads, and railways ; its mountains, rivers, kopjes, and veldts, was studied as a country other than our own is rarely studied. But this was not always syllabus-work, and under a rigid syllabus such treatment of a subject does not always secure adequate examination value. Could we have given value for that work, and added value for the lessons in loyalty and patriotism taught inside and outside the school walls, the efficiency-mark of the schools would have been a higher one.

We think the time has come for a thorough revision of the syllabus. Its provisions beyond those dealing with the fundamental subjects should be made reasonably elastic, giving scope to the individuality of the teacher, and permitting adaptation to the circumstances of his district. The burden of arithmetic should be reduced. Some of our most capable teachers hold that a fifth of the school time is absolutely necessary to compass the work prescribed ; the disciplinary value of the subject does not warrant this expenditure of time, still less does the economic. There might well be less of formal and more of applied grammar, grammar bearing immediately on reading and composition. We would treat history-books and geography-books as reading-books, and in the higher standards reduce the memorising of facts and dates to the minimum. Geography should be excluded from the pass-subjects of the Sixth Standard, as it has been from those of the other standards.

The Lawrence District High School has to the full maintained its good position ; but the three other schools have fallen short of a good standard. The teachers of these schools are, we should remark, to a large extent dependent for success on the character of the work done by their pupils while in the standard classes—especially the Sixth Standard—and their pupils are drawn from schools of varied efficiency. With a mixed multitude in Standard VII., nothing short of whole-hearted enthusiasm in the teacher can beget enthusiasm in the pupils and command success, and we can imagine cases in which even that will fail.

Reference to the Board’s regulations will show that for Standard VII. in the primary schools a fairly advanced though elastic syllabus of work is prescribed, and the following table shows that satisfactory results have been attained :—

TABLE E.—SHOWING THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE STANDARD VII. CLASSES ACCORDING TO THEIR GENERAL EFFICIENCY-MARK.

| —                     | Weak. | Fair. | Satisfactory. | Good and Very good. |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|---------------|---------------------|
| Number of schools ... | 11    | 19    | 22            | 22                  |

In reporting for 1899 we felt impelled to plead for more liberal treatment of Standard VII. We urged that our Education Department should, like the Home department, at least double the capitation grant for pupils in Standard VII. doing satisfactory work. We are pleased that this