

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS.—At the end of 1908, 159 schools were in operation. During 1909 there were opened new schools at Maranui, Lansdowne, Petone West, and Homeburn, while small aided schools were closed at Toro, Mangaorongo, and Pakowai, leaving at the end of the year 160 in operation. It may be noted that the schools opened represent over 800 children, those closed less than twenty.

ATTENDANCE.—The increase in 1909 over the numbers of 1908 was 564 in enrolment and 760 in average attendance. The average attendance was thus 89·6 per cent. of the average roll, an improvement of 1·5 per cent. on the corresponding percentage in 1908. It was 2·5 per cent. higher than the average percentage for the Dominion in the preceding year, 1908. This satisfactory result is largely due to the favourable weather and health conditions, the improving road-conditions, the co-operation of parents and teachers, and the attention of the Board's Truant Officer. The factor in producing good attendance, on the potency of which the Board desires most to rely, is the faithful and efficient service of those teachers who succeed not only in imparting sound instruction, but also in making the school at the same time so attractive to the pupil that he will strive to attend every day. Notwithstanding the satisfactory results above noted, and making due allowance for misfortune, there still remains quite a large number of parents who, as regards education, are by no means alive to the best interests of their children. Over 4,000 breaches of the attendance sections of the Education Act were reported, and in 119 cases it was found necessary to take legal proceedings. Convictions were recorded in 104; eleven were withdrawn owing to improved attendance; in two summonses were unserved, and two cases were dismissed. The number of legal attenders—those who make the bare number of attendances required by law—is still so very considerable that the Board sees no reason to withdraw, but rather desires to emphasize, its recommendation previously presented to you, that with proper exemption safeguard every child should, during the years of compulsory attendance, be required to attend each day, except where satisfactory explanation is given. The Board again notes with regret the number of withdrawals of children from school long before their age and the advancement of their education justify their removal—and this notwithstanding a law of compulsory attendance up to Standard V. This leakage must result in future serious loss to the State, through the reduced efficiency of those who are thus educationally half-equipped, hurried from school to labour. Thus, on the occasions of the Inspectors' visits in 1906 there were in the district enrolled in Standard III 2,017 children; the following year the enrolment in Standard IV was only 1,931; yet another year saw the number reduced to 1,737 in Standard V; and in 1909 to 1,382 in Standard VI. In the years 1907–9 similar reductions took place in Standards III, IV, V, the numbers in which were as follows, 2,087, 2,012, 1,772. During the years mentioned, 1906–9, the total enrolments in the district were respectively: 1906, 16,416; 1907, 16,564; 1908, 17,038; 1909, 17,605.

TEACHING STAFF.—The following are the numbers of teachers, pupil-teachers, and probationers who were in the Board's service at the end of the year:—

	Male.	Female.	Totals.
Heads of schools	63	10	73
Sole teachers	29	57	86
Assistants	51	184	235
Pupil-teachers	14	65	79
Probationers	1	24	25
Total	158	340	498

Of the adult teachers, 122 men and 190 women, total 312, possessed certificates; eighty-two were uncertificated, six of them holders of a license to teach.

INSTRUCTION OF TEACHERS.—Several courses of instruction for teachers were held during the year. At Wellington the courses included drawing and handwork, conducted by the technical school staff; cookery, by Miss McIntosh; woodwork and cardboard modelling, by Mr. Howe; singing, by Mr. Parker. At Masterton Mr. Parker conducted a large singing-class, and Miss Talbot a cookery-class. At Greytown Mr. Davies held three courses of instruction in agriculture, each extending over a fortnight, to attend which each teacher surrendered a week's holiday. The Board is pleased to note the continuance to country teachers of the privilege of railway travel to courses of instruction, for, while it may be possible to point to isolated instances of teachers who have not made the most of their opportunities, the majority have studied with a praiseworthy enthusiasm which has undoubtedly resulted in increased efficiency. The singing and the agricultural courses have been of special assistance to those who have had no other opportunities of instruction in these subjects. The enrolment at the former was 139, at the latter 63.

TRAINING COLLEGE.—The total number of students enrolled was 93—from Wellington 34, Wanganui 29, Hawke's Bay 13, Nelson 5, Taranaki 3, Marlborough 3, Grey 1, Westland 1, Otago 4; 50 were of the first, 43 of the second year; 60 of Division A, 30 of Division B, 2 of Division C, and 1 admitted under clause 11; 20 were men, 73 women. Full advantage has not been taken of the opportunity afforded under Division C for the admission of uncertificated teachers. Only two applied, although the attention of each Board was directed to the matter. The increase in the number of students has greatly taxed the already insufficient accommodation. Application has been made for grants for increased accommodation, and, if the efficiency of the instruction is to be maintained, the question of accommodation, and of site also, must soon receive effective consideration. The work and needs of the college are dealt with at length in the Principal's report.

SCHOLARSHIPS.—There qualified at the December examination for junior free places 130 candidates, and for senior free places 37 candidates. Junior Board Scholarships were awarded to thirty-one competitors, and Senior to thirteen competitors. There continues to be a noticeably small number of entries in the C class of Junior Scholarships (for schools up to forty).

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.—The total average attendances in the secondary departments at district high schools for the years 1907, 1908, and 1909 were 463, 441, and 374. The decrease last year was due chiefly to the disestablishment of the Terrace School and the opening of the new Boys' College. The number of district high schools remaining is nine.