

1,307 in 1908. There is an apparent decrease in Standard VII, but this is due to the fact that the free-place boys formerly at the Terrace and Newtown District High Schools are now attending Wellington College.

EFFICIENCY.—For purposes of efficiency we have classified our schools as follows :—

Good to very good	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	53
Satisfactory	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	87
Fair	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	13
Inferior	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8

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In all but one of the schools marked "inferior" changes have been made in the management, and the teachers have left our service.

EXAMINATION.—The plan of examination for proficiency certificates as outlined in our last report worked out satisfactorily. The candidates from the city and suburban schools and district high schools (amounting to nearly 90 per cent. of the total S6 roll) were examined by us in their own schools during the latter part of November and the early part of December. Certificates were awarded to the remainder on the results of an examination supervised by head teachers, and taken in conjunction with examinations held by us at the time of our annual visits.

APPOINTMENTS.—In lieu of advertising vacancies the Board has this year in several instances availed itself in terms of the Act of the right of transferring teachers from school to school. In the interests of country schools it is advisable that for the future this right of transfer should be more generally exercised. The Board is year by year experiencing greater difficulty in finding suitable applicants for vacancies in country schools. While a vacancy in a city or suburban school will bring in twenty to thirty applications from experienced and certificated teachers, for a similar position in a country school, and advertised at the same time, there is often not a single certificated applicant. The transfer system is the only way to counteract this increasing disinclination on the part of our teachers to take service in the country districts. Some definite plan of grading teachers is, of course, necessary to render such a policy effective. Under some Boards we notice that this is already done, but in the interests of the transfer system and of the teachers themselves, we think it inadvisable that each Board should have its own system of grading. There should be one uniform system for the whole Dominion. This is one of the matters we hope to see settled at the coming conference.

SYLLABUS.—Three important educational conferences will meet early next year, and our present syllabus will be one of the main subjects for discussion. In view of this we would preface our remarks on this subject by saying that as far as our experience has gone our better teachers have done better work under the new *regime* than they did under the old. The converse, however, is also true, for poorer work has been done by the less skilful and less experienced teachers with whom the greater freedom has resulted in lack of concentration of effort, and the natural question therefore arises, Have we gained or lost by the change inaugurated six years ago? Many educationists are quite decided in their opinion that we have lost ground. They contend that formal grammar, which they consider one of the fundamental directive forces in English, has practically disappeared from the syllabus; that in arithmetic speed and accuracy have deteriorated; while in geography, that minimum of political and commercial geography necessary for every intelligent citizen has been sacrificed to mathematical and physical questions of doubtful utility. While admitting that there may be some truth in this criticism, we must remember that there are some defects which are inseparable from the fundamental changes that have been made in our educational methods. Modern educationists are endeavouring to change the schools from the old rigid formal institution, where the child went "to listen," and where his every faculty, save that of imitation and receptivity, was undeveloped if not stunted, to one of which, while what may be called the more mental part of the child's training shall not be neglected, full justice shall be done to the more active aptitudes and characteristics of his nature—his hand and eye are to be trained, his spirit of enterprise, power of initiative, and habits of observation developed and stimulated by instruction in manual subjects, by investigation and experiment in the laboratory and by the intelligent study of nature—expression in "doing" is to take the place of impression in "listening." As we have said so often before, no adequate preparation was made, nor could be made, to fit the mass of our teachers for so great a change except through the training colleges, and it is to these institutions that we must in time look for teachers trained in the newer methods.

Whilst, generally speaking, head teachers show a wise discrimination in the matter of freedom of classification, instances have come under our notice where the reverse has been the case, and we have had to impress very strongly on some teachers the necessity of exercising more discretion in their promotions, especially in Standards IV and V. If the duty of keeping back all weak children is to be relegated to the Inspector at his individual examination for proficiency certificates in Standard VI, then the benefits which freedom of classification was supposed to confer on both teachers and pupils are lost, and we may as well revert at once to the old system. It is in the schools below grade V that this matter has come most prominently under our notice.

Reviewing the results of our annual examinations, we note that in the marking of reading many of our teachers were disappointed with our estimate, which in some cases was 65 per cent., as against the teacher's 90 per cent. Reading connotes more than verbal accuracy, and more prominence should be given to the appreciation of the author's meaning, readiness in oral expression, correct pronunciation, and clear enunciation. The best reading is obtained in those schools where English is treated as literature—where a number of additional reading-books is used, and where good use is made of the school library.