

of the appreciation of the value of school life is the demand from the Board, on behalf of three pupils, for special certificates and prizes in recognition of their attendance for five or more years without a single absence. Three such cases were also recorded in the previous year, and the Board has granted during the past fifteen years twelve certificates to pupils that have shown their zeal to such an exceptional extent. In view of the infrequency with which the compulsory clauses of the Education Act have been enforced, and taking into account the adverse climatic conditions, the devotion to school duties indicated by the general regularity of attendance is a tribute to the method and efficiency of the instruction given by the teaching staff of the district.

In Table B* has been included a statement of the number of half-days each school has been open during the year. It will be seen that only five schools have reached 420 half-days, while seven, including the largest, have remained in operation for less than 400 half-days. The pupils of two zealous household schools applied themselves to study on 432 and 441 half-days respectively.

The same table shows that of the thirty-four schools twenty-one have been recorded as reaching a good or very good standard of efficiency in the instruction, nine as satisfactory, and four as fair or weak. The last are in Grades 0 or 1. The general result is very encouraging and gratifying. One feature has been emphasized that is significant. The schools examined in September and October, with few exceptions, had overtaken so much of the work of the year that the results would have been commendable if presented in December. A large proportion of the pupils of Standard VI of these schools presented at the same time results practically sufficient to satisfy the requirements of a proficiency certificate. While this achievement was more prominent than usual, it illustrates a tendency of the schools to regard the Inspector's annual visit and not the end of the school year as the time at which the whole course should be presented. His judgment and appreciation are desired for a complete and not a partial preparation. It has, in consequence, been necessary to indicate at the time of the annual visit the parts of the course to be revised and the studies set for the next standard that might suitably engage attention during the remainder of the school year. To put the position plainly, the uniform school year is not popular among the schools under sole teachers, where preference is held for a school year ending with the Inspector's visit. It is a question that may well be considered, whether this class of schools should not be placed on a footing different from that occupied by schools under head teachers, seeing that in those of the lower grades the Inspector's direction of the whole work of the classes is more intimate and necessary.

The work of this class of school does not demand skill in the control of large classes, and consequently teachers with little experience or training frequently reach a high measure of success that would not necessarily be obtained by them if placed in larger schools. A more individual knowledge of the capacity and daily progress of the pupils is naturally possible where the numbers are small. Earnestness and energy without special training are successful, therefore, provided the instruction in the subjects of the course follows satisfactory lines. Good text-books form important guides in this direction, but the chief element in the institution of good methods is the example and direction of the Inspector, whose work should very largely consist in suggestions as to the scope and other treatment of the various subjects, and in illustrative lessons by way of example. Fortunately, there is opportunity in this district, and the effect is evident.

In such schools the teachers ask not for vague directions and for scope for the assertion of individuality, but for a definite indication of what is required. A tendency is evinced by a number of teachers under existing conditions to follow the text-book minutely, whether or not the course presented coincides with that of the prescribed syllabus of instruction, and there is other evidence that the work of the small schools should be more clearly defined—that the matter should be arranged concisely and simply, and in such order as will indicate the proper gradation to be followed in its treatment. A great deal has been done to meet this difficulty by the issue of definite schemes and of a specimen time-table. These have been welcomed and adopted in a manner that is no way perfunctory. A completer system of direction of the sole teachers is intended when the revised syllabus of instruction is issued.

A separate report on the secondary classes indicates that their efficiency has been fully maintained. A difficulty that exists is the decision as to the course to be adopted, especially by the senior pupils. The extension of the requirements of the Matriculation examination to a four-years course, and the maintenance of success in that examination as a standard of attainment for entrance to various services, present an obligation either to compress the studies into three years, or to induce the students to remain for the full course of four years. Neither is very feasible. If, on the other hand, the Matriculation examination is to be rendered less necessary, an early intimation to that effect is urgent, so that only those who intend to proceed to the University will require to be specially considered. At present there exists an unsatisfactory uncertainty as to the scope of future operations.

The number of pupils, other than those of the secondary classes, that had previously obtained proficiency certificates was nine. Of these, only two prepared a special course, the remainder being content to revise the Sixth Standard course or to prepare for the Scholarship examination.

The number on the roll of Standard VI, either at the time of the annual visit or on the lists presented later, was sixty-six. Of these, fifty-one, or 77 per cent., obtained proficiency certificates, and eight were awarded competency certificates. The number of full passes is unusually high, and the result is especially commendable.

The instruction of all the private (Catholic) schools inspected was at least satisfactory, and the majority were recorded as good. Of twenty-three on the Sixth Standard lists, fifteen obtained proficiency certificates and two certificates of competency.

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A. J. MORTON, Inspector.

The Chairman, Education Board, Hokitika.