

In 1903 it was pointed out in the Board's annual report that the average attendance at our schools, which had stood, some years previously, at 74 and 75 per cent. of the average weekly roll, had risen to 85·9. This record had to be abandoned in 1904; while in 1905 and in 1908 the same thing happened, fresh records for these three years (of 86·6, 87·3, and 87·5 respectively) having been established. For 1910 the percentage was 87. Otago (90·5) in this respect headed the educational districts of the Dominion, the other districts superior to Southland being, in order, Marlborough, Westland, Wellington, South Canterbury, Hawke's Bay, and Auckland. It appears to us that though, all circumstances considered, Southland may have done well, she might yet do better.

The remarkable increase (404) in roll number for this year calls for some notice. The greatest increase previously noted was in 1907—252. The increase for the present year exceeds the total increase for the first five years of the period we have been considering by no less than 144, and is considerably more than double that of last year. During the year 34 schools have risen, and 22 have fallen, in grade. In the case of the schools affected in Grades VIa—Xb the changes were uniformly for the better. It is notable that all the schools of one particular grade (VIb) improved their position—East Gore, North Invercargill, Otautau, Waihopai, and Winton. From these facts it is fairly apparent that while Southland has had a liberal share of the prosperity lately prevailing in the Dominion, the urban population has increased at a greater rate than the rural.

Under these circumstances it is natural that applications for new schools and for increased accommodation in established schools should be numerous. It will be necessary to sift all such applications very carefully, and generally to treat them with the utmost caution. The multiplication of small schools at distances which render the transfer of pupils from one to another an easy matter creates many evils of the existence of which we are unhappily cognisant. Pupils are filched by underhand means; teachers resort to very unprofessional advertising and to popularity-hunting; while Committeemen of adjoining districts vie with each other in touting for pupils—all to the detriment of true educational interests. In all cases where the system of centralization by conveyance is possible it should be applied.

Towards the close of the year the examination for the Standard VI proficiency certificate was held at twenty-one centres throughout the district, a considerable number of candidates in the more remote districts having been previously examined at their own schools. In this work we were assisted by Mr. W. Macandrew, a teacher in the Board's service who, having laboured for many years with unfailing fidelity, enthusiasm, and success, was about to retire to a well-earned rest. His services, we need hardly add, were of the utmost value to us. Details of the examination follow:—

Candidates from	Total Present.	Obtained Proficiency Certificate.	Obtained Competency Certificate.	Failed.
(a.) Public schools	704	522	60	122
(b.) Private schools	29	18	5	6
Totals	733	540	65	128
Percentage, all schools, 1911	74	9	17
" 1910	62	13	25

These results are eminently satisfactory as compared with those of former years. They indicate in one respect at least a higher state of efficiency in our schools, and show that the efforts of our teachers have been guided by a clearer view of the scope of the examination than formerly. The youths now leaving our schools can read with fluency ordinary current literature, express their thoughts in writing with clearness, freedom, and in very fair style, and command a knowledge of arithmetic possibly a good deal beyond their future requirements. In two directions, however, we should like to see considerable improvement. The attainments of these pupils in reading warrants us in stating that they have the ability, if not the desire, for self-improvement so far as that can be accomplished through books. As, however, a considerable number of them read and recite indistinctly, mechanically, and with little sympathy or interest, they will, we fear, be found wanting on those social and public occasions in their after-life for which distinct and effective speech is necessary. Nor (judging by the results of the examination) does the value of mental arithmetic seem to be appreciated. True, many useful publications and appliances have of late years learned the necessity for mental calculation. There are still, however, many occasions in life when arithmetical problems have to be solved without the aid of pencil, paper, or mechanical contrivances; and it is very desirable that on such occasions our young people should not be found wanting.

The discrepancy between the number on the roll in Standard VI and the number presented at the Proficiency Examination is still considerable. It arises, we believe, from unwise promotion of weak Standard V pupils to Standard VI. No pupil should be placed in Standard VI who has not a reasonable chance of passing his examination at the end of his year's tuition in Standard VI.

During the year Saturday training-classes, for the benefit mainly of uncertificated teachers, were organized and carried on with satisfactorily results. In addition to this, a departmental grant enabled assistance to be given towards the close of the year, by way of correspondence