

During the year the curriculum of the rural course has been adopted in five of our district high schools; but owing to the difficulty regarding buildings the work has been carried on under considerable disadvantage. At four of the schools the buildings are now complete, and the necessary grants have been authorized in the case of the fifth. In the course of a few days we shall have the necessary equipment landing from Home. The course has proved popular with the pupils, the staffs of the schools have thrown themselves cordially into the work, and the visiting teachers have proved themselves capable, earnest, and enthusiastic workers. The harmonious relations existing among the teachers in this scheme justify us in predicting that the course will prove successful. In this connexion we have to express our indebtedness and gratitude to the Managers and the Director of the Dunedin Technical School for the consideration shown by them in granting us the free use of their chemical laboratory and appliances. Without such assistance it would have been almost impossible to carry on the work during the year. Our thanks are also due to Messrs. Speight and Co. for a supply of seed-barley; to Messrs. Donald Reid and Co. for supplies of varieties of seed oats and wheat for the experimental plots at the various schools; and to the Agricultural Department for supplies of seed, and for assistance in spraying the potato plots. In the same connexion we have also to express our appreciation of the generosity shown by the Otago Agricultural and Pastoral Association for donating four prizes for the potato-growing competition in the school-gardens.

The garden-work in the primary schools has materially improved during the year. This is due to the keen interest shown in the work by Messrs. Green, Healey, and Ridley, the Board's agricultural instructors. Besides weekly visiting the district high schools, these gentlemen have visited all the primary schools at which garden-work is taken up, and by their example, instruction, and advice have assisted and encouraged the teachers to place this branch of school-work on a sound footing. In addition to the work in the schools, these instructors conducted courses of instruction for teachers at Alexandra, Ranfurly, Dunedin, and Oamaru, and their lectures were much appreciated by those attending. It is largely due to the efforts of these gentlemen that so many of our young teachers have been successful in the recent departmental examinations.

During the early and middle parts of the year classes of instruction in wool-sorting for farmers were conducted at Alexandra, Oturehua, Ranfurly, Waipiata, Middlesmarch, Clydevale, Waiwera, Balclutha, Tapanui, Heriot, Clinton, Hyde, Palmerston, Lauder, Warepa, and Lawrence by Mr. J. McGregor. These classes were well attended, and the instruction was thoroughly appreciated by the students.

Miss Burgess, the Board's instructor in dressmaking, held classes for instruction in this subject at several country centres; Mr. Jackson, one of the instructors in woodwork, conducted classes in carpentry at Lawrence and Tapanui; and Miss Allen had charge of a class in cookery at Tapanui. All these courses were well attended, and students have freely expressed their appreciation of the benefits they have received. Hence it will be seen that, besides controlling the work in the primary schools, the Board has rendered considerable assistance to the cause of general education throughout the district.

The following figures show the grouping of the schools according to their efficiency: Excellent, very good, or good, 60 per cent.; satisfactory, 34 per cent.; fair to inferior, 6 per cent. These figures show material falling-off in the first group and an increase in the second and third groups. The decline in group 1 is attributed to the serious effect of the epidemics previously referred to, while the increase in the number of unsatisfactory schools is due in part to the same cause, and in part to the fact that in these schools are to be found untrained, and in several cases ill-educated, teachers.

We are pleased to have to record material improvement in the compilation of schemes of work; but we again found that in several schools these were not complete at the time of our first visit. Under the regulation issued by the Board towards the end of the year, teachers are now required to have their schemes fully compiled a fortnight after the commencement of the year's work.

Following the practice adopted in previous years, we examined candidates for the proficiency certificate as far as possible in their own schools, and in the larger centres only did we adopt a modified form of central examination. The results of the proficiency examination are considerably higher than those of the previous year. A careful scrutiny of the papers shows that this is due to improvement in arithmetic, in composition, and in general geography. In our opinion, the departmental tests in arithmetic were somewhat easier than those of previous years, while the systematic long-tot work carried on during the year had materially increased mechanical accuracy. In every case a long-tot test was given in addition to the Department's card, and the result was most gratifying. For the last two years teachers have been devoting more attention to topographical and economic geography, and less to mathematical, and the pupils sitting for proficiency certificates have benefited largely by the change. At the beginning of the year arrangements were made by which, in those schools the Standard VI pupils of which were taking woodwork and cookery, the geometrical drawing for the class would be taken at the manual-training centres. This afforded considerable relief to the class-teachers, and had the advantage of placing the drawing in direct relation to the work of the centre. The result has been most satisfactory, and we intend to continue the practice.

The following results in subjects at the proficiency examination of twenty-seven large schools the pupils of which were examined in centres may prove of interest at the present stage:—

Percentage for the School.	Arithmetic.	Composition.	Geography.	Drawing.
80 to 100	2	1	..	..
70 to 79	10	3	5	8
60 to 69	6	18	15	14
50 to 59	9	5	7	5

The high results gained in this examination are very gratifying, and bear eloquent testimony to the industry and skill of the teachers.

In the case of teachers of experience and high ideals we usually find the pupils classified with a discretion that ensures the best condition for progress; but to prevent the mischief that inevitably