

Recent appointees have usually been qualified applicants, as the proportion of certificated teachers working as assistants and of sole teachers of schools below Grade III has increased.

There were also twenty-three pupil-teachers and eleven probationers.

Certificates of Proficiency and Competency.—Central examinations for proficiency certificates were held by the Inspectors in November or December at Nelson, Richmond, Wakefield, Motueka, Westport, and Grangity. For Reefton candidates the written examination was supervised by the head teacher of the Reefton District High School. When Standard VI pupils could not be centralized the examination was taken at the time of the annual visit to the school. The results were as follows: Number examined in Standard VI, 430; proficiency certificates gained, 234; competency certificates, 135. The great disparity between the proportion of proficiency certificates granted in different educational districts has of late received much comment. The percentage of certificates gained according to the 1912 returns ranged from 42 per cent. to 86 per cent. The return for this district has always been one of the lowest in the Dominion. Reasons for this may be the inefficiency of the teaching and a strict interpretation of the requirements on the part of local Inspectors. We cannot admit that the former is the dominant factor or has much influence upon the result except in so far as we possess so large a proportion of small schools in Grades 0 and I, controlled for the most part by untrained and inexperienced teachers. The effect of this drawback, too, is partially counterbalanced by the fact that such schools present a very small number of candidates, as few children from them ever reach the Sixth Standard class. For example, we had from—

	Number of Candidates.	Proficiency.	Competency.
Forty-nine schools in Grades 0, I (sole-teacher schools)	36	12	11
Thirty-four schools in Grades II, III, (sole-teacher schools)	59	31	21
Forty schools in Grades IV or higher (head teacher)	335	191	103

A competency certificate represents a satisfactory knowledge of the requirements of the Sixth Standard course, whilst the proficiency certificate, requiring as it does 60 per cent. of marks, is an award of special merit and a qualification for a free place at a secondary, high, or technical school. When over 80 per cent. of those in the class regularly attain such a distinction one naturally concludes that the examiners do not err on the side of severity. The general opinion of Inspectors is that 60 per cent. should represent the maximum number of proficiency certificates granted, so that a strict standard of examination such as hitherto has been maintained in this district has the approval of the inspectorate at large. Moreover, we have heard little here of secondary-school complaints, common enough in some quarters, that many of the children who obtain free tuition are at entrance not qualified for secondary training.

Most of the columns in the appended summary for the whole district are furnished in the Inspectors' annual return:—

Classes.	Number on Roll.	Present at the Annual Examination.	Average Age of Pupils in each Class.	Average Age for the Dominion in 1912.
			Yrs. mos.	Yrs. mos.
Standard VII	114	104	14 9	15 1
" VI	409	404	14 0	14 0
" V	563	552	13 1	13 2
" IV	753	743	12 2	12 3
" III	779	763	10 11	11 3
" II	826	803	9 11	10 3
" I	765	749	9 0	9 1
Preparatory	2,316	2,209	6 10	7 0
Totals for 1913	6,525	6,327	9 9*	...
Totals for 1912	6,311	6,138	9 9*	9 9*

* Mean of average age.

Standards VII and VI show very little variation; Standard I is smaller this year, but all other classes are larger. The preparatory class, though sixty-seven higher than previously, still remains the same percentage of the total roll, thirty-five, so that the disproportionate growth of this division that so persistently prevailed till 1911 has apparently been checked. The average age is lower in all classes except the preparatory and Standard VI. In Standard III it has fallen four months.

We submit, as usual, a brief estimate of the quality of the instruction in several subjects of the curriculum.

English.—Generally the following tabular statement of the efficiency of schools in the different branches of the subject shows that we have been thoroughly satisfied with the treatment that each has received:—

	Reading.	Writing.	Spelling.	Composition.	Recitation.
Efficient schools	97	104	81	95	109
Non-efficient schools	15	8	31	17	3