

At the request of the Council of Governors the preparatory divisions of the Nelson Colleges were also examined for promotion and for certificates. The numbers on the roll were—Boys, 15; girls, 11; but eleven others sat for S6 certificates, making a total of twenty-two in these classes. All obtained certificates, sixteen proficiency and six competency being awarded. Special examinations were held in only three instances, two candidates obtaining proficiency and one a S5 competency certificate. At inspection visits throughout the year when examinations for their own schools were not in progress some few children who could not be centralized applied and sat for examination, and since the central examinations were held in November and early December applications for special examinations have been numerous, but through pressure of other work the Inspectors were unable to grant the requests.

The number on the rolls of the public schools of the district again shows a marked increase, the average weekly number for September quarter being 6,731, or 202 above that for the corresponding quarter of last year. Additional numbers have been introduced by the growth of Motueka and the opening of new schools in the neighbouring recently settled fruit-lands, by increases in certain mining centres such as Reefton, Caplestone, Burnett's Face, Hector, and Puponga, and by larger attendance at Brook and Tasman Street, Nelson, and Westport District High Schools. The last, the largest school of the district, had at the end of the year a roll number of 771. The only instance of a marked falling-off is to be found at Seddonville, a decrease of twenty-six pupils. At the close of the year the district roll number was 6,858, and the average attendance (6,016 for the year) for the first time reached 6,000.

The slight falling-off in regularity of attendance, from 90 to 89·6 per cent., for this year is not unaccountable considering the prevalence in certain localities of epidemics of scarlatina, measles, whooping-cough, or chicken-pox, though these complaints were far from being general to the whole district. The percentage of average attendance for the whole Dominion last year had reached its maximum, 90·1 per cent., a remarkably high record, in itself a credit to and a mark of appreciation of our national system of education. This year sixty-six schools record an average attendance of at least 90 per cent. Ten of the Grade 0 and three of Grade I, almost all of them being household schools, return 100 per cent. of attendance, but the most noteworthy of the sole-teacher schools are Clifton Terrace and Marahau, each 96 per cent.; Uruwhenua, 95 per cent., and Takaka Central, Motupiko, and Fairdown, each 94 per cent. All those to which we called special attention last year for inferior attendance now show to better advantage, but the pupils of some of them cannot yet be regarded as attending with satisfactory regularity.

The working-time of the schools was reduced by the fortnight or twenty half-days devoted to the instruction of teachers in physical exercises; nevertheless forty-five schools were open on at least 400 half-days, and all but thirteen, at which less than 380 possible attendances are recorded, may be considered to have worked fairly regularly throughout the school year. In almost all the cases noted the loss of time was occasioned by some extraordinary cause, such as the closing of school on account of the prevalence of an epidemic, the illness of a teacher, the alteration of a class-room, or the temporary loss of a teacher through removal to another sphere of action. The time lost in the instruction of teachers is more than compensated by the improved efficiency of the teaching staff, who, considering the exceptional circumstances of the year, and especially the heavy drain upon their personnel, may fairly claim to have done their duty in assisting to keep the flag flying.

As a consequence of the war the enlistment of many capable men from the service has created a dearth of qualified teachers, and towards the close of the year an unusually large number of head teachers left the district on promotion elsewhere. The refilling of all the numerous vacancies has produced, and may still further produce, a lowering of the general status of our teaching staff. In the employ of the Board on the 31st December were 214 teachers, classified as follows:—

					Certifi- cated.	Uncertifi- cated.	Total.
Head teachers	...	...	...	...	39	1	40
Assistants	...	...	...	...	64	29	93
Sole teachers	...	...	...	...	23	58	81
					126	88	214
For 1914 the figures were	...	...	...	...	134	72	206

Comparing the returns of each year with those of the previous one, we find in 1914 a total addition of six teachers to the staff, but of eleven uncertificated; in 1915, of eight more teachers, but of sixteen more uncertificated. In other words, during the two years all newly created teacher-ships and thirteen old positions have had to be supplied by the unqualified. In addition to the teaching staff tabulated above twenty-one pupil-teachers and seventeen probationers were employed.

Central examinations for proficiency certificates were, as hitherto, held by the Inspectors at eight different centres in November and early December, both public and private schools being assembled. The numbers given below are those of the public schools only, but are increased by about a dozen pupils who had some three months before been examined at their own schools and were for good reasons permitted to attend the central examination for a second attempt: Number of candidates, 353; proficiency certificates, 224; competency certificates, 87.

At other schools which are not within easy reach of a centre by train or within five miles by road all the Sixth Standard children were, as usual, individually examined on the occasion of our announced inspection visits. The number of candidates for certificates was much greater than hitherto—namely, candidates, 190; proficiency certificates, 98; competency certificates, 58—so that the totals for the district were—Candidates, 543; proficiency certificates, 322; com-