

There has been a slight decrease in the number of schools at which instruction more or less related to agriculture has been given, the numbers being, for 1918, 1,390, and 1,384 for 1919. It is felt that while valuable work within well-defined limits has been done in the past, and that many children have received an introduction to elementary scientific method, a very elementary knowledge of chemistry, physics, botany, and biology, and a practical acquaintance with gardening, the net results are not altogether commensurate with the energy and enthusiasm that have characterized much of the instruction. The probable causes of this are not far to seek, and it is to be expected that a clearer understanding of the aims and methods of elementary agriculture in primary schools will follow from the conference held during the year of those specially engaged in directing and teaching this subject in the several school districts.

The following table shows that the number of district high schools providing a course of instruction bearing on rural pursuits is forty-seven :—

District.					Number of Schools.	Number of Pupils.	Approximate Capitation earned.
							£
Auckland	..	..	..	..	12	437	3,302
Taranaki	..	..	..	..	1	111	1,014
Wanganui	..	..	..	..	5	172	1,091
Hawke's Bay	..	..	..	..	3	100	901
Wellington	..	..	..	..	6	281	1,819
Canterbury	..	..	..	..	13	361	2,728
Otago	..	..	..	..	7	173	1,310
Totals, 1919					47	1,635	£12,165
Totals, 1918					47	1,413	£9,172

The science subjects of the rural course are for the most part, as heretofore, taught by visiting instructors, and in all the districts an excellent course of work is carried out. The rural course has not been established sufficiently long to enable conclusive deductions to be made as to its value, but that every boy who had completed a course of two or three years at one of the district high schools is at the present time engaged in farm-work appears to indicate that the course has not altogether failed. It was, however, never intended that this course should be a direct preparation for agricultural pursuits; its limitations and the conditions under which it could be carried out were fully recognized. It is, however, hoped that a closely correlated scheme of rural instruction will soon be available, in which the nature-study of the primary schools and the elementary rural science of district high, technical high, and secondary schools will be vitally linked together, leading to a course of instruction in farm schools as a complete preparation for farm life and work.

It is to be regretted that there is a continued drop in the number of recognized elementary science classes. While the importance of those subjects of primary education that are fundamental and the necessity of devoting as much time as possible to them is acknowledged, it should be found possible in all schools, if facilities are available, to arrange for a course in, say, elementary physical measurements for Standards V and VI. In this connection the words of a wise educationist are worthy of consideration: "I grant that the tendency of the times is to exaggerate the good which teaching can do, but in trying to teach too much, in most matters, we are neglecting others in respect of which a little sensible teaching would do no harm."

The number of approved classes for swimming and life-saving remain as for last year.

Approximate capitation earnings by Education Boards for the year amounted to £52,284, as compared with £41,906 for 1918, the large increase being due to the amended regulation providing for an increase of 20 per cent. on capitation payments for manual instruction; while grants amounting to £2,948 in aid of buildings and equipment were received. The total receipts of Education Boards