

*Recitation.*—We found some improvement both in treatment of the matter and in the selection of the pieces to be studied, especially in the case of the younger teachers. The efficiency of the subject, however, is very variable on the whole. In the matter of appreciation we found, at one end of the scale, schools where every poem was torn into what may be termed “rags of comprehension,” while at the other end there were schools where the pupils had little or no idea whatever of the general meaning of the lines they had tried to commit to memory. A middle course between these two extremes leads to deeper interest, easier and more complete memorization, and a natural and fluent delivery. There has been rather a tendency to leave too much of the material to the pupil’s own choice. Where this has been done to excess, disaster has almost invariably followed. Guidance in selection should always be given. This can be done by the provisions of suggestive lists for each class. Every class library should contain suitable anthologies of poetry for reference by the pupils.—(*Otago.*)

*Speech Training.*—With scarcely any exceptions, this subject now occupies a definite period of five minutes daily on all time-tables. We have asked that for each class or group of classes a detailed scheme should be prepared. These short periods are intended for the cultivation of purity of speech, and not for instruction in free oral expression or grammatical construction.—(*Wanganui.*)

Regular attention is being paid to speech training in most schools, and instances of imperfect speakers are rare as far as consonantal forms are concerned. In these cases a study of the placement of the various organs of speech will usually suggest the necessary remedy. Faults of vowel sounds are harder to detect and more difficult to cure. A tendency is sometimes noticed to distort certain vowel sounds—e.g., “day” being pronounced as “die,” “my” as “moy,” “now” as “neow.” In all these cases it is the first part of the diphthong that is wrongly sounded, and if the teacher carefully analyses these sounds and leads the pupil to pronounce the initial sound correctly the children can be led to distinguish the correct from the incorrect sound of the diphthong.—(*Southland.*)

*Spelling.*—There is nothing definite in the treatment of spelling, the teaching appears to be in a confused condition, and the subject is by no means a strong one in our schools. Some teachers prepare lists based on the words met with in the year’s schools operations; others use ready-made lists which are compiled mainly with regard to graduated difficulty but which have little connection with the pupils’ general studies; and others again cling affectionately to the ancestral “page to page of lessons read” system. Probably the most successful are those who not only blend the above methods, but also really and specifically teach spelling, making free use of devices which appeal to the eye and the ear. Outstanding weaknesses in the compilation of lists are (1) poor gradation (too difficult words being given to young children), (2) overlapping, (3) isolation of words from general work of the school. In a large number of schools the subject is an untaught one. Teachers consider that if children can be persuaded to read widely they will spell creditably before they leave school. In the meantime their composition, their history, their geography papers, are marred by misspelt words. A few years ago spelling was made a fetish in our schools; to-day the pendulum has swung too far the other way. Direct instruction in spelling is necessary. But the practice of oral spelling of lists of words apart from the written or printed symbol in their context is of doubtful value, inasmuch as, with nearly all children, the eye plays a more important part than the ear, in the process of learning to spell.—(*Auckland.*)

We consider this to be one of the least satisfactory subjects in our schools, and have urged upon teachers the desirability of effecting an improvement. The words given to the Proficiency candidates were all in common use, but the number of mistakes made was surprising. All teachers do not realize that the greater part of the lesson should be spent in teaching the correct spelling of words, and not in testing what the children have been set to learn without help. The importance of frequent revision of words commonly misspelled should not be overlooked. It seems to us that in many schools too much time is being spent by the children in writing out the spelling words in sentences. We doubt whether this method as usually practised really helps much in the learning of spelling. While finding much to commend in the various published spelling lists, we are of opinion that all teachers would be well advised to supplement these with words which their own children use and misspell.—(*Wanganui.*)

Spelling is the only English subject with which we are not satisfied. It seems to be tested more than taught. There are too many errors in the ordinary written work, especially in the essays. Even where the subject is taught from lists the same fault is noted. We propose giving special attention to spelling this year.—(*Nelson.*)

Satisfactory methods of taking the formal lessons in this subject are adopted in most schools, and the spelling of the words treated in such lessons is generally well known. We find, however, that in essays the spelling of common and familiar words is often very bad indeed. The chief lines of improvement in the treatment of spelling appear to be—(1) More careful attention to pronunciation; (2) prevention of overlapping by the adoption of a progressive and co-ordinated minimum spelling list for the whole school; (3) more careful supervision of the work; (4) keeping of individual lists of errors, the words being taken from *all* written exercises.—(*Otago.*)

*Writing.*—It is pleasing to note a distinct improvement in the quality of the writing of many pupils, not only in formal exercises but also in the ordinary class-work. We have advised teachers to give some practice in more rapid writing in Standard V and Standard VI. The use of print-script during the first year and a half in the primer classes has been recommended; after that we are of opinion that cursive writing should be taught, but we have done nothing to discourage the use of print-script throughout all the classes.—(*Wanganui.*)

At the request of the Department we made some investigations of writing in the schools. The tests in quality and speed were conscientiously carried out. With regard to quality, the great variety in the standard of marking is partly explained by the fact that some teachers used the *Gazette* scale of writing as their basis of marking, even for Standard II. High marks were rarely awarded by some