

REPORT
OF THE
Superintendent of Schools
OF THE
TOWN OF HAMPDEN.

1899-1900.

Superintendent's Report.

To the School Committee of Hampden.

GENTLEMEN:—The work of the current year has been along lines of development and fulfillment of previous plans rather than a deviation from them, and though progressive it has not radically differed from that of preceding years.

Aside from the statistics the annual reports of a small town can vary but little and at this time it seems unnecessary to do more than to note the few changes that have taken place, make brief mention of existing conditions, and call your attention to our most imperative needs.

The establishment of a uniform school year throughout the state merits your attention.

Heretofore our fiscal and school years nominally coincided. In reality they varied considerably. The fiscal year ended in March; the work of the school year practically closed with examinations and promotions in June. As far as possible necessary changes were deferred till the long vacation and teachers and pupils started afresh at the beginning of the fall term.

The same discrepancy existed in other towns and cities. Some of the fiscal years opened in the spring, some in the fall, and still others in the winter and often the school years failed to correspond. An arbitrary change of the former was impracticable, but the latter is now uniform, beginning in September and closing in June, throughout the Commonwealth.

In the spring a register, to be used during that term only, was furnished each school but in the fall a new one much more complete and definite was supplied and hereafter reports will be less complicated and less subject to error.

A stricter enforcement of the laws relating to absence

and truancy has resulted in better attendance, a matter of congratulation to all having the best interests of the children at heart. Except in cases of illness or unusual urgency, attendance upon school should be constant and regular and this rule should apply to those who are over fourteen as well as to those under that age. Pupils who are frequently absent never manifest much interest in their work and are often disaffected and unhappy.

The town has been fortunate in retaining most of its former corps of teachers. Only one change has been made this year. Miss Leola Bradway resigned at the close of the fall term and was succeeded by Miss Clarinda Kibbe, the present teacher of the school on the Scantic.

Elementary algebra has been introduced in the ninth grade and the following topics have been considered: notation, the four fundamental operations, reduction of fractions, factoring, the nature of the equation, and practical problems.

A knowledge of these subjects not only aids in the solution of difficult arithmetical questions but those who continue their studies will find the gaps between their elementary and secondary work narrowed by their familiarity with algebraic processes.

English history has been given a place among the branches taught in the ninth grade. The formal study of American history, which is read in several of the lower classes, is now begun in the seventh and finished in the eighth year of the child's school life.

The valuation of Hampden is less than half a million and high school tuition paid by the town would therefore be reimbursed by the state but, as has been stated in previous reports, there is no law obliging either town or state to pay tuition to academies not located in the town. There is some ground for belief that this matter will ere long receive the attention of legislators and in the meantime it seems a great pity that so many leave school at the close of the ninth year, or as soon as they reach the limit of the compulsory age.

It is certainly a great misfortune when parents are

obliged to take their children from school before they have completed a full grammar course. Without this elementary training they must enter upon life's duties at a disadvantage which they cannot overcome and it is difficult to imagine them occupying positions of importance or emolument when they are grown.

Even now, scholarship is at a premium in nearly every trade, business, or profession. The state recognizes the requirement of the times and strives to place a high school education within the reach of every child in the Commonwealth.

Statistics prove that the percentage of those who avail themselves of these privileges is increasing faster than the population. Between 1883 and 1898 the population of Massachusetts increased forty-one per cent., while the public high school enrollment gained a trifle less than 100 per cent., advancing from 19,423 to 38,133.

View it as one may, to stop to argue or to quarrel with the trend of affairs is to be left behind. Far-sighted men of unbounded charity are urging parents to give their children as liberal an education as they are capable of receiving, even at great sacrifice or personal loss and the most mercenary are beginning to realize the fact that it *pays*, not only in the pleasure it gives and the position it secures, but pecuniarily.

A person may spend a short time in preparation for his life work and secure a position where his salary soon exceeds that of the man who has spent years in study, but the earning power of the *scholar* increases with every year of experience while the one with meager equipment receives his maximum in a short time and is soon pushed aside to make room for a younger person. In one case, long preparation, scholarship, and experience make the physician's, lawyer's, or skilled artisan's opinions more valuable,—and his fees larger,—in the other, the chances and the wages decrease as physical force weakens.

Hampden is the only town within this district of supervision which does not employ a special teacher of drawing and for another year I urge the engagement

of such an instructor for one day of each week, assured that the benefit to the children will far outweigh the very slight additional expense to the taxpayer which at the highest estimate cannot exceed a half-mill on a dollar.

With this single recommendation this report is respectfully submitted.

MARY L. POLAND.

March 3, 1900.

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