

Thomasville Public Schools

Thomasville, Ga.

NINTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

FOR THE
SCHOOL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1910

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

SUPERINTENDENT'S GENERAL REPORT.

To the Board of Education:—

Gentlemen:—In compliance with your regulations, I herewith submit my report for the school year ending June 30th, 1910. In it is shown the present condition of the schools, together with such phases of them as may be worthy of note.

I have pleasure in reporting a greatly improved general condition of the schools in point of increased patronage. The year just closed has seen the largest enrollment, the highest average attendance, and the highest percentage of attendance made since the schools were organized nine years ago. Permit me to call your attention to the following phases of the condition of the schools:

I. ATTENDANCE.

By a study of the statistics given elsewhere in this report, it will be seen that great improvement in attendance has been made, but much yet remains to be done before ideal conditions are realized. Many children are prevented from attending school at all, while others attend so irregularly that they do not advance in their studies. Irregularity in attendance not only baffles our best efforts in education, but the habit itself is hurtful to the child. The process of education is the process of inducing right habits of body and mind, and, among these, none are of more permanent value and contribute more to the subsequent success of the pupil than habits of regularity and punctuality.

Lost Along The Way.

Somewhere between the first and eighth grades, including death losses and those who enter other schools, 55 white and 83 colored pupils out of a hundred, drop by the way, that is, never reach the eighth grade.

This year there were 97 white and 43 colored children in the first grade against 54 white and 7 colored in the eighth grade. In a graduating class this year of ten, there was only one boy. This means a large per cent of our boys and girls do not complete even the common school course. Better school organization, and still more competent and consecrated teachers, will improve this condition, but even these are not sufficient. There is an indigent class that must be provided for by our state or city, and a certain indifferent class that cannot be reached except by legislation.

More Girls Than Boys.

As elsewhere indicated, a much larger percentage of girls than boys are completing the public school course, which means that many boys are rushing into business, the trades, and professions unequipped. In the blaze of the twentieth century civilization, when competition is sharp, and the fittest alone can survive, this condition ought not to obtain. Such a condition ought to give the parents of boys just grounds for alarm, and to warn the boys themselves that education in this age is the law of material and spiritual preservation.

Tardiness.

It is very noticeable that certain pupils get into this habit. A weekly list is kept and compared with the previous week generally reveals a certain chronic set of pupils who have formed the tardy habit. Parents may well look with alarm upon such habit and if they are in any manner responsible for it, and they usually are, their chagrin should be all the greater. The loss to the child is not so much in time out of school, as in the formation of a bad habit. It often is the beginning of the end of the school days altogether. The unruly truant begins by forming the habit of being tardy, and this in turn is the beginning of a career of failure and misery.

II. DISCIPLINE.

With the successful teacher whose heart is in his work, discipline has ceased to need attention. Teachers have learned that a healthy mind pleasantly and usefully employed is never dangerous to the peace of the home, school room, or state. The chief study of the teacher now is substitution instead of repression. When mischief is brewing and energy is running to waste, it is time to substitute an interesting or instructive play or work. So it has become common to say "He governs best who governs least." Children are endowed with moral sentiments, and if properly approached, they will generally be found to respond to kindness, deference to their rights, gentleness, and appeals to their sense of honor. Effort is made to lead pupils to understand that punishment is certain and retributive, and that to every violation of law a penalty is fixed from which there is no escape. From this they are led to believe that it pays to do right.

Self-Control.

No person should be permitted to teach who does not rule his own

spirit. The chief use of discipline is to teach self-control, and unless the teacher can be example in this, his precepts will fall. The teacher needs all his energies, and unless he learns to conserve them and pay them out with jealous care, he will soon fail in health and fail professionally.

Expulsion.

I have found the boys and girls of our city ready to respond to noble appeals, easy to win, and easy to govern. The moral tone, for the most part is good, and a co-operative and sympathetic spirit animates the great heart of the school. It has not been necessary to expel a pupil during my administration, and only one has been suspended. We believe it is the business of the school to form and reform character, and this cannot be done by expulsion.

III. OUR TEACHERS.

An efficient school necessarily implies an efficient teacher in charge. The building and all its furnishings may be the best that money can buy, but without an efficient teacher we cannot have an efficient school. The difference between a good school and a poor one is chiefly a question of teachers. The most important question, therefore, that the school administration has to face is the securing and retaining teachers of efficiency. The first essentials of an efficient teacher are refinement of character, habitual use of good English, teaching power, education, and technical preparation. It goes without saying that she must have good health. No parent would wish to put his child in charge of a teacher who lacks in one of these essentials. But the whole world is seeking women with just these essentials; they go into the homes as wives; they go in to the professions now open to women. They are sought in the offices as typewriters and accountants; and new opportunities are clamoring for them every day. The proportion of refined, well educated, cultured, strong women that go into teaching is, therefore, comparatively small, and it is getting still smaller now these prosperous times are offering such good salaries in other fields.

Salaries.

The scantiness of the supply makes the work of finding efficient teachers a very difficult one, and it is becoming more difficult each year, since greater and greater demands are made upon teachers, and teachers' salaries have not increased to correspond with the increase of expenses and the increased remuneration in other lines of work.

The teacher's vocation has a responsibility all its own, and it is farther reaching in many of its aspects than that of any other. A "cheap" teacher is an anomaly, and none but the best are worthy of employment. These worthy ones are priceless and the good they do is beyond measure.

No material effort will lift the standard for teaching faster than an increase of salaries. Better services and better compensation go hand in hand. I desire to commend this Board for the material increase in

our teachers' salaries made by the "Graduated Scale," adopted a year ago, and to urge a still greater increase as the efficiency of our teachers may become apparent, and the funds of the Board may permit.

Appointment And Dismissal.

The power to appoint and dismiss teachers resides primarily in the Board of Education. The exercise of this power should rest upon knowledge of a teacher's fitness. This knowledge may be obtained only through a thorough inspection of a teacher's work. Members of the Board of Education are usually men of affairs or professional men, whose business or whose professional duties occupy a great part of their time. Were the appointment and assignment of teachers their only duty, time would fall them. Their work is manifold, and rests with committees chiefly. One of these committees is the "Committee on Teachers." The Superintendent should be a member of this committee, and through it, his power will be exercised.

It is believed that in no other way can teachers be so wisely selected as upon the Superintendent's recommendation and a wise selection of teachers is certainly the most important duty in school administration. So far as the Superintendent's tenure is concerned, it is undoubtedly better to rest the nomination of teachers in a standing committee of the Board. When, however, this duty is imposed upon the Superintendent, some provision should be made that, in some way, would afford him needed protection. If he be conscientious, the disappointed rain upon him their blows, and he stands without defence of those whom he serves. The least thoughtful clamor for his overthrow and the schools suffer loss. Were his acts hidden in a committee, over whose acts he might possess a controlling influence, his services would be retained until the wisdom of his counsel were fully approved.

IV. COURSE OF STUDY.

Next to the teachers, the course of study is the most vitally essential factor in the modern school. To be of real value, a course of study must be in a constant state of development. Whenever it ceases to require any changes, it is dead. All human activities during the past twenty years have seen radical changes in their character and methods. A "fixed idea," in educational polity is no more desirable or profitable than in the industrial or commercial sphere. The fundamental principles of educational work continue unchanged, but the methods of applying these principles and the lines of emphasis are constantly changing. The spirit of the age requires the modification of old methods and their adjustment to the ever-changing conditions that present themselves in the industrial, commercial, and social life of the individual. The school curriculum is an attempt to present an adequate summary of the needs of the child as a citizen and a member of society.

The course of study may be broadly divided into two great divisions. The first consists of those time-honored subjects which compose the so-called essential studies, or the formal culture group. The first place

is naturally accorded to the subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, language, geography, history, and spelling. The place of these topics in a course of study is unquestioned, though a radical change has come about in the methods of teaching them. These subjects are better taught today than ever before in the history of education. The arithmetic may not cover quite so wide a field as formerly, but there is no reason for lamenting the dropping from the course of study such topics that have long since been dropped by the merchant and the banker. Even in the subject of spelling, in which any novice feels competent to pose as critic, and solemnly declare that "spelling is not taught in the modern school," I am convinced that better results are obtained than ever before. The critic is apt to forget that the skill he now boasts of was probably not gotten in school at all, but in the severe drill of actual life. Much less is said about penmanship, for he now dictates to a stenographer or uses a typewriter to disguise his chirography. In language, grammar, geography, and history, fair results are attained. It would be folly to claim that the results in any of these subjects are satisfactory, and our teachers have not yet reached that stage.

Where they have been made a part of the curriculum, it has been demonstrated that the best results in the so-called culture subjects, that is, those just mentioned, can be secured in conjunction with the subjects of vocal music, nature study, domestic science, drawing and manual training. These practical topics constitute a group, the educational value of which is not always appreciated. Such has been the change in public sentiment, however, in the past ten years that today progressive communities require the inclusion of these practical lines of training in the curricula of the schools.

V. NEGRO SCHOOL.

So far as the negroes are concerned, not over one-fourth of them are in school. Ordinarily, they enroll at the age of 8 or 9 years and continue in school until they learn to read and write. The lower grades are crowded, but the upper grades are very light. About three-fourths of the pupils are in the first five grades, and one-fourth in the last five. Could it be done, it would not be an unwise thing to eliminate entirely the high school grades, and have only seven years' instruction for negro pupils. This would take them from eight to fifteen years, which is as long as many care to stay in school. This saving of expense could be turned into industrial education, which would be to their great advantage.

Nearly every negro child in the city has been taught to read and write. He has been to school somewhere and for some time. Illiteracy is rare. The negroes show a commendable eagerness to attend school through the primary grades and to submit to any sacrifice to secure an education. Inasmuch as a large majority of the negroes do not remain in the public schools through the grammar grades, and a very small percentage of them are found in the high school grades, I believe the

correct policy of the Board should be to provide instruction for them through the grammar grades, and leave them to pursue the higher education at their own expense, if they desire it. There are a number of excellent private schools for negroes in our city in which the higher branches are taught.

In this connection, I should like to add that these suggestions are in harmony with the ideas of the present Principal of the negro schools whose accompanying report indicates.

VI. SOME NEEDS OF OUR SCHOOL.

Permit me to suggest a few immediate needs of our schools in order that they may render a more practical and a nobler service to our people in the instruction of their children.

Libraries.

An earnest effort has been made to build up a library suitable for each grade. The few books we have are read enthusiastically by the children and are helping the teachers cultivate the reading habit among the pupils. We need more books for each of the grades. Many of the children have no books to read except those they get from the grade libraries and yet childhood is the time to fix the taste and habit of reading.

I very much desire to have two or three sets of supplementary readers in each of the primary grades so that the children may have the opportunity to get variety of expression, and thus enlarge their vocabulary. The supplementary reader should not be regarded as a study-book, but as a test of the pupil's acquired vocabulary, and as an opportunity for its daily use. We are approaching that desirable condition when pupils finishing the primary grade shall be so proficient in reading that they may discontinue it as a study, and use it only as a means of acquiring information and a knowledge of literature.

Physical Training.

We need a systematic method of physical training extending throughout the schools from the first grade through the high school.

Sanitation.

Our facilities for furnishing the teachers and children with drinking water need to be improved. This can be done with but little cost, and it would add greatly to the comfort, pleasure, health, and manners of all.

Special Teacher.

As soon as the finances of the Board will warrant it, I would strongly urge the employment of a special teacher to supervise the drawing, penmanship, singing and physical culture, or as many of them as such teacher might well supervise.

Ungraded Room.

I have thought a great deal of what an ungraded room would do for us. Wherever it has been tried, it has proven to be eminently successful. The aim of such a room is to take those who, for any reason,

have fallen behind in their work; and by special help, prepare them to be returned to their class. The boy or girl who leaves school before the grade is completed, or who completes it unsatisfactorily, is generally the unawakened pupil and has to receive his awakening through his struggle for existence after he leaves school. Is it not better that his habits of thought and attention be formed before the cares of life are assumed? It is to serve this purpose that many school systems have established ungraded rooms

The pupils benefited by establishing such a room would be those who are kept back because of weakness in one or more subjects; those who are not strong enough physically to do the work of a grade in the allotted time; pupils coming from other schools whose course of study differs widely from our own; some bright pupils, who are capable of doing more than the usual amount of work, might be able to skip a grade; pupils who have attained to years and stature beyond their advancement. We have in our own schools pupils fifteen years of age doing fourth grade work.

Our Time.

The teachers and grades have been greatly annoyed during the past year on account of confusion arising from inaccurate time-pieces and the lack of uniformity in the ringing of the bell. At present, the bell is rung by some pupil in the sixth grade who spends his time watching an unreliable time-piece. If this duty could be given to the janitor, it would greatly help the work in every grade.

East-Side School.

Now that a school has been established on the east side of the city, I deem it imperative that the Board, through a Special Committee divide the city into two school districts, and that this be done as early as possible. Inasmuch as it cannot accurately be determined the number of children that will be enrolled in the primary grades until the schools actually open: I think it wise that the districting of the city be made with great care; and it might be well that it be temporary until the number of children in each district is ascertained.

VII. CONCLUSION.

In closing this report, I desire to thank the Board of Education for their confidence and support. So long as I serve in my present position, I shall do so to the limit of my ability, and to this end I shall studiously apply all my energies to every detail of the school work. The children and parents of Thomasville have the right to expect the best Superintendent and corps of teachers that can be employed, and the taxpayers have a right to demand it. Only one claim, that of merit, or efficiency, should be considered in the employment of those who teach our children.

To the teachers and pupils, I extend profound thanks for their sympathy and co-operative spirit. Our labor has been one of mutual pleasure and profit

To the patrons of the schools, a word of thanks is also due for their patience with our short-comings. We have done our best, yet we are aware that some mistakes have been made.

Finally, let us turn our eyes from the past to a future more promising, and let our unselfish Board of Education, our faithful band of teachers, a patient public, and all other factors of our community, work together for one great purpose—BETTER SCHOOLS FOR THOMASVILLE.

Very respectfully,

JOHN S. ALLEN, Superintendent.

July 1, 1910, Thomasville, Ga.

STATISTICAL REPORT

	WHITES			NEGROES		
	Boys	Girls	Tot'l	Boys	Girls	Tot'l
Number Registered	317	302	619	101	167	268
Number Remaining at End ..	242	241	483	72	124	196
Average Monthly Enrollment	263	255	518	80	136	216
Average Daily Attendance ..	242	238	480	70	115	185
Per Cent. of Atten. on Average	94.5	94.5	94.5	91.0	89.0	90.0
Number of Tardies, Pupils	908	607	1515	689	1241	1930
Number of Truants	4	1	5
Number Corporally Punished	46	1	47	247	170	427
Number Suspended	1	0	1
Number Days Taught... ..		171			170	
No. Holidays, including Xmas		9			10	
No. of Tardies, Teachers. ..		59			1	
No. Absences, Teachers. ...		49			22	
Number Teachers... ..		17			6	

ENROLLMENT BY MONTHS.

	WHITES			NEGROES		
	Boys	Girls	Tot'l	Boys	Girls	Tot'l
Grade 1.....	53	39	97	18	25	43
Grade 2.....	39	31	70	26	29	55
Grade 3.....	41	45	86	18	31	49
Grade 4.....	40	30	70	10	19	29
Grade 5.....	38	30	68	12	18	30
Grade 6.....	13	24	37	8	16	24
Grade 7.....	26	30	56	5	17	22
Grade 8.....	27	27	54	1	6	7
Grade 9.....	22	24	46	1	3	4
Grade 10.....	10	11	21	2	3	5
Grade 11.....	3	11	14
Total.....	317	302	619	101	167	268

ENROLLMENT BY GRADES.

	WHITES			NEGROES		
	Boys	Girls	Tot'l	Boys	Girls	Tot'l
Month 1.....	276	265	541	86	143	228
Month 2.....	277	267	544	91	143	234
Month 3.....	273	262	535	85	135	220
Month 4.....	264	255	519	73	132	205
Month 5.....	263	253	516	81	146	227
Month 6.....	262	253	515	80	134	214
Month 7.....	260	251	511	78	136	214
Month 8.....	252	248	500	78	130	202
Month 9.....	242	242	483	72	124	196
Monthly Average..	263	255	518	80	136	216