THE VIRGINIA TEACHER

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EDUCATIONAL COMMENT

VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOLS 1920-1921

The following statement gives in summary some of the more important facts bearing on Virginia high schools as ascertained by the State Supervisor of High Schools, Henry G. Ellis.

High school development in Virginia in the session 1920-1921 was marked by a healthy general improvement and a tendency towards higher standards. The increased high school enrollment, the tendency of the schools to conform to the plan of reorganization of high schools adopted by the State Department of Education in 1918, the increased salaries of teachers, and the slight improvement in physical equipment of the schools were the most encouraging features of the reports for the year.

The total number of public schools accredited as standard four-year high schools was 250—an increase of 32 over the previous session. There were 102 partially accredited public high schools, and 39 accredited public junior high schools. There were also 45 private institutions accredited by the State Department of Education as standard four-year secondary schools.

In the public accredited, partially accredited, and junior high schools were enrolled 32,996 pupils. There were employed 1713 full time teachers, including principals, and 218 part-time teachers. The median average monthly salary of teachers, including principals, in rural accredited high schools was $118.16, and in city accredited high schools $132.00. The median per capita cost of instruction in rural accredited high schools was $66.00, and in city accredited high schools $49.00. In rural junior high schools the median per capita cost was $91.51, and in the city junior high schools $51.92.

The median number of volumes in libraries of rural accredited schools was 350, and in the city 1,000. The median value of laboratory equipment in rural accredited high schools was $400 and in the cities $2142.50. The median average daily attendance in the rural high schools was 93%, and in the city schools 94%. Rural high schools dropped from the roll 12% of the total enrollment, and city high schools 11%.

Of the high school teachers 30½% received their training in state institutions, 34½% in private institutions of Virginia, 26% in out-of-state institutions, and 8%, including teachers of commercial branches, trades and industries, music, and other non-academic subjects, had no collegiate or normal school training.

SCHOOLS NEED PARENTS’ AID

In a letter to a Parents’ Association of one of the New York City schools President Anning S. Prall, of the Board of Education, says:

"I believe in parents’ associations. I wish that there were more of them in this great city. The results of parents’ organizations is constructive and for the betterment of the school system. Campaigns of misrepresentation are never conducted by parents’ associations, and it is not only a pleasure, but it is indeed refreshing to meet with them and to discuss school problems."

TEACHERS’ COUNCILS

The teachers’ council idea is rapidly spreading throughout the United States and in most cases is working to the immense advantage of superintendents and boards of education. The best thought on school management at present recognizes the value of giving the classroom teacher a voice in the management of the affairs of the school as a whole. The teachers councils are merely extensions of this notion to the effect that super-

*85 high school teachers received their training at Harrisonburg.
intendents and boards of education may be frequently aided by the advice of the teacher: who are nearest to the problems that frequently demand attention. The needless fear that such organizations may infringe upon the functions of the superintendents has hitherto checked progress in many communities, but where superintendents, boards of education, and citizens are genuine well-wishers, they are quick to see the value of the advice and assistance of the classroom teacher in the solution of classroom problems.

VALUE OF LESSONS ON FOOD AND NUTRITION

An experiment carried on in Akron, Ohio, in teaching lessons on food and nutrition to ascertain whether improvement in the physical condition of children could be produced through the medium of instruction alone, indicated by a large percentage of gain above normal that instruction did result in better health and improved living conditions. The results of this experiment should encourage those who have been making an effort to arouse interest in this work in our public schools.

ADVOCATES THE MOTION PICTURE IN EDUCATION

Enthusiasm for the motion picture business was recently expressed by Sir Gilbert Parker in unmeasured terms. The whole movement of the film world, he declares, has been upward during its decade of development from the day of the nickelodeons. He advocates, not only the large use of motion pictures in education, but is a staunch believer in the establishment by the Government of a regular film service in the schools, as a means of accomplishing important ends in citizenship education.

BETTER SALARIES FOR BETTER TEACHERS

Of the public school teachers of the United States 140,000 have had training equivalent to high-school graduation and two years or more of professional training in addition. Of our public-school teachers 560,000 have had less than this modest minimum. America's greatest educational need is a trained teacher for every child. To reach this goal, the members of the teaching profession in America must agree to the following—

1. Make use in season and out of season of legitimate effective publicity and propaganda.

2. We ourselves must see to it that needed legislation is enacted which will require a decent minimum of training for all who are permitted to enter the teaching profession.

3. Superintendents, principals, and high-school teachers must comprehend the problem as a whole and exercise such influence that a fair percentage of the best boys and girls in the upper quartile of our high-school senior classes shall be attracted into the teaching service.

4. The State must provide teacher-training institutions of college rank properly equipped and supported, and numerous enough to insure within a reasonable period—five years—a trained teacher for every child.

5. The public must everywhere accord to the teaching profession a decent degree of social recognition.

6. There will be a shortage of trained teachers until such time as compensation is adequate to make the profession attractive.

Adequate compensation must be sufficient to provide—

1. A living which includes food, clothing, housing, laundry, incidental essentials, medical, dental and surgical care, insurance, church, legitimate charity expense, and all desirable facilities for wholesome recreation and the promotion of health.

2. Social and professional growth, including expenditures for social life, including association with the attractive personalities of one's community, reading matter, music, art, expense of educational associations and meetings, travel, and professional training in institutions of learning.

3. For a high percentage of all teachers, women as well as men, especially those who have been in the profession five years or more, compensation for the support of members of the family or other dependents.

4. An annual surplus for investment. A teacher who has served faithfully and invest-
ed thriftily for a period of thirty or thirty-five years should have a living income from investments. The teacher is entitled to a return for the investment of time and cash involved in preparation for professional duties.

The average salary in the United States is still pitifully inadequate. It is not sufficient to attract enough high-grade young men and young women into the profession to do the job which must be done. This inadequacy is not due to National poverty. We are not poor. We are rich.

There is indubitable evidence of the ability of the United States to pay adequate salaries to the teachers of our public schools. This evidence may be enumerated under four heads.—The Journal of the National Education Association.

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HOW THE CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION IS SERVING THE STATE

The Co-operative Education Association is rendering an invaluable service to the cause of education in Virginia. For the past seventeen years it has worked continuously for the improvement of the educational and social needs of the state. Through the community leagues which are organized under the auspices of this Association, new buildings have been erected; teachers' salaries supplemented; music, libraries, and laboratories put in schools; establishment of medical and dental clinics; purchasing of playground and athletic equipment; or anything that was needed to improve the conditions in the school and community.

Last session three hundred and ten thousand dollars was raised by the citizens through the leagues for betterment of our schools. Two hundred citizens attended the various meetings of the leagues where they discussed and studied the big problems in connection with the school and community life. The school can not be a force in the community unless we have the interest and active co-operation of each and every citizen of the community. Providing equality of opportunity "for all the children of all the people" is no small undertaking. If this country is to continue to be the Mother Democracy, shedding its rays of liberty and freedom throughout the earth, we must have an enlightened and an educated electorate. The fountain head of our democracy is the public school system and the state must rise or fall with its schools. It must follow then that the best investment a state can make is in the education of its boys and girls upon whose shoulders the duties and responsibilities of citizenship must rest.

The plan is very simple. The teacher or other interested citizen calls a meeting of the people of the community. The purpose of the league to improve the school and civic conditions is announced and a short talk on the neighborhood needs is given. An organization is perfected and Committees on Schools, Health, Highways, Entertainment, Membership, and Civic and Moral Betterment are appointed by the chair. The meetings are held bi-weekly or monthly and a definite program suggested by the Co-operative Education Association is followed. Last year 346 leagues held patrons days; 144 observed health day or health week; 144 good roads meetings; and 177 leagues did special work along social and recreational lines.

Wherever Community Leagues are organized we have as a rule progressive schools. There are about 1400 school leagues in Virginia with 40,000 citizens among the membership.

The following is what Superintendent A. H. Hill says about the Co-operative Education Association: "I beg to say that the work of the Co-operative Education Association is so well established in the state of Virginia that I presume every well-informed citizen looks upon it as a permanent institution just as he looks upon the State Board of Education, the State Highway Commission, or the State Board of Health. The Co-operative Education Association has done a most valuable work in the development of rural communities and it would be nothing short of a calamity for anything to happen to impair its usefulness in our State."

George W. Guy