

PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA

During the session 1920-1921 there have been no outstanding or unusual features in the development of high schools in Virginia, but there has been marked progress, as the statistics in this Annual Report will indicate. It is, perhaps, fortunate that the progress is gradual and steady. In the past, the high school situation in Virginia has suffered from a too rapid and too hastily considered development, which even now impedes progress and handicaps the present policies of the State Board of Education with regard to high schools. It is believed that the present improvement, though not rapid, will be lasting.

Notwithstanding this marked progress, the high school situation in the State is still far from what it should be. In many school divisions there is a noticeable lack of definite, well-founded policies in the matter of high school development. This has led frequently to the establishment and maintenance of inefficient schools which are not measuring up to modern standards in any particular, and which can hardly hope to do so, and to wasteful expenditure of public funds. More attention could well be paid to the possibilities of consolidation, particularly of the consolidation of high school work in communities that are fairly well supplied with good elementary schools.

Even where there is a fairly satisfactory program of high school development, division superintendents are, in some instances, not sufficiently familiar with the high school policies of the State Board of Education. As agents and representatives of the State Board in their communities, they should be able to settle most local high school questions and problems, and should themselves bring matters about which they have any doubt to the State Department. When minor questions are brought by the communities directly to the State Department rather than to division superintendents, time is consumed which could be spent to better advantage, and possibilities of misunderstanding and confusion are multiplied.

Many communities have not yet come to a realization of the distinct difference be-

tween elementary and secondary school work and of the cost of maintaining a high school properly. The feeling that high schools can be established and maintained at almost every cross roads has seriously handicapped real high school development. Lack of appreciation of the necessities of a modern high school is shown in the failure to provide the necessary funds for teachers' salaries, laboratory equipment and supplies, library books, janitorial service and supplies and other necessary running expenses. Esthetic needs are rarely considered.

Unsatisfactory patch-work buildings are found all over the State and wretched sanitary conditions are by no means unusual. Improvement in these particulars has already begun and will be more rapid now that the cost of building has decreased so considerably.

The scarcity of teachers, which became so acute during the war, continued through the session of 1920-1921. Many teaching positions in the State high schools were filled by unprepared and totally incompetent teachers. Since many deserters are now returning to the profession, however, prospects for next session are brighter, though it is probable that the rural high school faculties will not be completely filled by trained and capable high school teachers for some years. This is due not only to the low salaries paid for high school work but also to the impossibility in very many communities of securing comfortable or even decent living accommodations for the teachers.

The supply of trained and professional principals is inadequate. Division superintendents, school trustees, and communities very frequently do not have a realization and appreciation of the place and function of a real high school principal. Sometimes the principals themselves fail to have this realization and appreciation. As a result, much work that should properly fall on the principal is neglected. Programs and courses of study, schedules, etc., are frequently carelessly arranged or not arranged at all. Important school records are neglected. Reports to the State Department of Education are frequently delayed and sometimes not made at all. Proper use is not made of even the limited library, laboratory, and other facilities which the schools have.

Many schools change principals annually. Very frequently the change does not materially better the condition of either the school or the principal.

But the high school outlook is much brighter than the above paragraphs would indicate. Throughout the State the attitude of communities is most commendable. Where a need is shown, there is usually a willingness to meet the need. There is a growing tendency to take advantage of the service and facilities of the State Board of Education. There is a splendid and rapidly increasing interest on the part of communities generally in the development of high schools and an increasing appreciation of the value of the standards which have been set up by the State Board of Education. The attitude of colleges and normal schools toward the accredited rating of the State Department of Education is more and more influencing the attitude of the general public and creating a demand for standard high schools. Better highways are having marked effect on high school improvement. The work of rural supervisors in many instances is showing the results by sending better prepared pupils into the high school. The return of many teachers to the class-room referred to above and the increasing supply of professionally trained principals will materially improve secondary education.

Supervision of the State Department of Education has had the advantage during the session of two men in the field, and has for that reason been more closely done than heretofore. Every effort has been made to supervise the schools as closely as possible without neglecting matters of broad general policy to give attention to individual schools.

During the year the supervisors have endeavored to continue the work of standardization according to the plans of the State Board of Education which was begun in the fall of 1918. Every effort has been made to bring about a broader acquaintance with the requirements and purposes of the State Board and to prepare the way for carrying out next year the policies which are announced below.

TWO TYPES OF HIGH SCHOOLS

In the fall of 1918 the State Board of Education changed its high school standards and policy. The old triple standards of first,

second, and third-class high schools were abandoned, and standards were erected for two types—the standard four-year high school and the junior high school. High schools which did not correspond to either of these two types were advised to determine their possibilities as soon as possible and to conform to one of the two types of organization. Owing to constitutional limitation on school funds, war conditions, and other handicaps, it was impossible to put the new policy of the State Board into full effect at once.

Since most of these handicaps have now been removed, the department will seek to carry out its new policy as rapidly as possible. Standards will be insisted on more rigidly in the future than they have been during the past few years. The requirements of the State Board of Education for standard and junior high schools are minimum requirements and must be fully met before any school will be accredited. These requirements must be met at the beginning of the session, or at least at the time of inspection of a school. Schools which are not already on the accredited list, and which wish to be accredited, must notify the supervisor of secondary education, through the division superintendent of schools, on or before November 1st of the session in which they wish to be accredited. No new high school will be placed on the accredited list without an inspection by the supervisor.

STANDARD FOUR-YEAR HIGH SCHOOLS

The development of standard high schools has been impeded in the past by the effort to develop too many such schools and by the lack of careful planning and location so as best to serve the needs of an entire school district or school division. New standard high schools should not be attempted until careful consideration has been given by the local school authorities both to the high school needs of the district seeking to establish such a school and to the financial ability to establish and maintain such a school. Divisions which are now endeavoring to do high school work in a larger number of schools should determine which of those schools are most favorably located for meeting the requirements as standard four-year schools and eliminate the high school work in the others or reorganize them as junior high schools.

THE RURAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The rural junior high school is designed in large measure to replace the nondescript rural school which now offers high school courses with inadequate teaching force and under conditions rendering such work ineffective, futile and wasteful. To accomplish this purpose, and introduce the junior high school with reasonable assurance of success, involves on the part of the division superintendent a survey of school conditions in his county and a definite policy of consolidation or concentration of high school work at localities which logically lend themselves to that end. On the part of communities it entails an appreciation of the superior advantages of the junior high school and a willingness to support an adopted plan of consolidation.

Schools seeking to become accredited junior high schools and to secure the State appropriation which accompanies such recognition are advised to consider carefully the minimum requirements and to consult freely with the division superintendent of schools. At the beginning of the session, a copy of the proposed junior high school program of studies should be sent to this department for approval. An application for inspection by the State supervisor of secondary education should likewise be filed not later than November 1st of the current school year.

It will be noted that no definite number of pupils is specified in the requirements for the junior high school department, as is the case with the four-year high school. The enrollment, or prospective enrollment, of the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, however, should be sufficient to justify the cost of employing at least two qualified teachers for this work. Except in cases of a very limited enrollment, it will be found that the program of studies is difficult to handle with two teachers. For this reason it is recommended that a third teacher, whose time may be divided between the elementary and high school departments, be employed. Particular attention is directed also to the requirements relative to certification of teachers, laboratory and library facilities and equipment. A bulletin on laboratory equipment issued by the State Board of Education may be had on application.

NON-ACCREDITED 12-15 UNIT SCHOOLS

These schools were developed under the old standards as second-class high schools and have not yet determined their possibilities under the new standards. For the present, schools which are already listed as 12-15 unit schools will be allowed to maintain their organization and remain on the list until they have had a reasonable opportunity to determine their possibilities and conform to one of the two standard types. Schools of this type offering three years of high school work will be allowed a maximum of 12 units and those offering four years a maximum of fifteen. In no case will unit credit be allowed in these schools for science work unless the provision for laboratory work is amply satisfactory. Such schools will be required to maintain a session of nine months and to employ at least five teachers in the combined high and elementary school faculty. The policy of the department will be to discriminate in the distribution of high school funds in favor of the two standard types of high schools. *No new three-year or 12-15 unit schools will be listed by the department.*

OTHER PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

Many schools in Virginia other than those accredited as standard four-year or junior high schools, or listed as non-accredited 12-15 unit schools, are attempting to do some high school work. For the most part these schools are not equipped or manned to do such work. The department does not attempt to evaluate or accredit any high school work done in them. Division superintendents and local school boards should seek to develop these schools by consolidation or to eliminate high school work from them as rapidly as possible, and use the money which is now being spent for such high school work in the development of the standard four-year and junior high schools. Since these schools are not recognized as high schools, they are not listed in this report.

Note: This statement is taken from the Annual Report of the public high schools of Virginia for the school year 1920-1921, which has just come from the hands of the printer. The Bulletin is Vol. IV, No. 1 of the publications of the State Board of Education, and contains valuable statistical information, summaries, and tables. The report was prepared by Messrs. Algar Woolfolk and Henry G. Ellis, Supervisors of Secondary Education.