I

RURAL SCHOOL STANDARDS

I. ERA OF STANDARDS

Each phase of present-day life is being standardized in order to promote efficiency, in order to insure the complete value of the article. For many years there have been standard weights and measures, standard currency; recently the desire for standardization has carried the plan into more remote places. The selection of men for special training as officers in the army was made through intelligence tests which would show whether they were up to the standard, mentally and physically, or whether they were above this standard.

II. BASIS OF STANDARDS IN THE PAST

In most cases a standard was attained from two sources. One was the old trial and error method. Many of our weights and measures have had such an origin. Many were established through attempting to furnish a feeder to some already standardized article. The latter was the origin of the oldest educational standards.

The universities were the first educational institutions to become standardized. These institutions, because of age and precedence, were able to say to the secondary school that to be recognized it must do thus and so for the pupils who would later become part of the great university.

Again, when elementary education became a recognized factor in the scheme of education, the high school felt that it should have the privilege of imposing on the lower school certain definite prerequisites for entrance into the high school. Most high schools had been placed under the annoyance of furnishing certain phases of elementary training which they would like to have discontinued. This was their opportunity.

The elementary school is not above using the same tactics. If you happen to listen to the complaints of some teacher above the first grade in the elementary school, you will eventually hear the statement: "The grade below should have taught this particular thing. I should not be annoyed by having children come into my room who do not already know this."

In like manner the urban schools have been placing their standards on the rural schools. It is usually in terms of the urban school system that the rural school is measured. The course of study is made out in terms of a school system which has but one grade, and usually but one section of a grade under each teacher. The methods of teaching are based on long recitation periods without interruption. If you read through the recent books on rural education, even the best, you will find that they are dealing with the teaching process in terms of the formal recitation. These standards do not fit the rural situation any more than the high-heeled pump of the fashionable city street suits the country lane.

III. WHERE SHOULD THE URBAN STANDARDS AND THE RURAL SCHOOLS BE THE SAME?

a. Length of the school term.

The city child has the privilege of attending school for a period of 180 school days. The rural child in Virginia averages 147 school days if he be white, and 120 if he be black. In Europe the average school year is 250 days. Why can we not have that time? In the South we have the idea that school is physically harmful and that children can barely stand the strain of 180 days. Yet they are much happier and in much better physical condition in school than at home or at play. Another very potent reason for a school term of 180 to 250 days in the rural communities arises from the necessity of the older boys' and girls' assisting at home and on the farm. Those boys and girls should have an opportunity of attending on the average 180 days during a year. If the school is in session but nine months the older pupils will lose part of this time.
b. **Physical Conditions**

1. **Buildings**

Not all city schools are models either from the standpoint of beauty or of physical condition. Many are old, and inadequately meet the needs of the children. Therefore the cities do not always have excellent school buildings. On the other hand, there are through Virginia some excellent two, three, and four-room rural schools, having well lighted rooms, good systems of ventilation, and the necessary sanitary arrangements. But the one-room school is frequently the sufferer from lack of building funds. These schools, if they meet the requirements of the state, should have the same floor space, the same light space, and conditions for heating and ventilating as would be approved by any school system. Many old school buildings are still being used in Virginia which could not meet the conditions set up in the school laws.

2. **Equipment**

Frequently you find in the rural school equipment that had been discarded by a town or city system. Here again the rural child should have the necessary equipment that will enable him to work without bodily strain. One-room schools should have their desks so arranged that floor space would be available for many free activities. There should be provided a work-table and chairs for the younger children, and work benches for the older boys and girls. It is not necessary to buy expensive equipment for the schools. The older boys, with the help of some interested member of the community, could make these desks and tables. I found an excellent work bench in a negro school which had been made by the seventh and eighth grade boys. If the chairs are not possible, small benches could be made. One corner of this room should have a reading table, a comfortable chair or two, and some good pictures. Here pupils and patrons should be able to spend a few leisure moments reading some interesting book or magazine. These could be contributed from many sources.

c. **Health Conditions**

A decade ago people believed that all one needed for good health was to live in the country. A survey was made of the health conditions of Orange County, Va., some years ago. This showed a much more serious condition among the rural population than had been supposed to exist. Neglect of teeth, adenoid growth, diseased tonsils, and such conditions are prominent. Health habits are considered non-important. Regulations concerning contagious diseases are disregarded. For all these reasons, it is necessary to put on a strong health campaign in the rural districts. A school nurse is needed; the superintendent, supervisor, and teacher should be able to co-operate intelligently with her and help in improving the conditions in each community. Health instructions should be given in school; the few health regulations sent out by the State Board of Health should be closely followed. Each school should try to become a model health community.

d. **Qualifications of Teachers**

In the past two years there has been a struggle in all communities to secure the necessary teachers. But the city schools of the state have not suffered to the same extent as have the rural schools, because they were able to offer larger salaries.

In most cities of the state at the present time, the teachers of the elementary grades must have had at least normal school graduation, while the high school teacher must present a diploma of graduation from a standard college. It is true that many of the older teachers in cities do not measure up to these requirements, but, because of their valuable service, they are retained. But, if you desire to secure a position in the city school, you must present a Normal Professional Certificate if you are to teach in the grades, or a Collegiate Certificate if you are to teach in the high school.

The rural teacher should have the same qualifications. I have visited a few counties where the same standards prevail, and where I should say that the percent of teachers having the stated certification qualifications are approximately the same as in the city systems. But this is not true of all parts of rural Virginia. In some cases the teacher has had barely the equivalent in education to that offered by the little rural school in which she is now teaching. These teachers may have a second grade certificate. In many cases in the past few years they may have been unable to secure even this certificate.
Recently I issued local permits to a number of girls who had attended a summer normal for six weeks before taking the examination, but failed to make 75% on the elementary subjects even when the questions were written by the instructor under whom they had worked for six weeks.

c. Salary of Teachers

In order to secure teachers having better qualifications, it is necessary to pay a salary equal to the salary paid in a city. It may have been true in the past that a country teacher could live much more economically than a city teacher. This does not seem to be true at the present. Most of the rural communities charge proportionally as much for board as does the city. Regardless of cost of living, the self-respect of the teacher demands equivalent salaries in the rural schools.

f. Development of the Pupils

The purpose of the established school system is to develop the children of the people to their full capacity for the length of time that they are in the school. Unfortunately this development has been in terms of formal subject-matter rather than in terms of general development. In the past this was necessary, as there were no standards for measuring intellectual growth. At present it is possible to measure both the general intelligence and acquired information in standard terms. According to these measurements there should not be a standard norm for city children of a certain age and a lower one for rural children of the same age. These should have developed equally according to their native ability. In 1919 the average score in reading for the seventh grade rural schools was 6.9 and for city schools was 7.3. Virginia one-room schools in 7th grade spelling had a score of 52.6; the city schools had a score of 63.1; while the standard was between 66.0 and 78.2. In arithmetic the rural four-room school had a score of 15.1, which was between the standard of a fifth and sixth grade score.

IV. DIVERGENCE FROM URBAN STANDARDS

So much for the standards which should be the same in the rural and urban schools. There still remain some phases of rural education which should have a different basis for operation. It may be that these can not be standardized in the same way as some of those already mentioned, but the results of this form of education as measured by the aforementioned standards should enable the school officials to place a real valuation on the methods of procedure.

a. Grading the School

City school systems are arranged in grades, each grade representing one year of the pupils' development. Each of these grades has a well-marked course of study which in some instances is sufficiently formal as to require certain subjects on certain days of the month. There is the historic incident of a superintendent who, looking at his watch, said to a visitor, "It is now ten o'clock. I can tell you exactly what each pupil is studying at this very minute, so exact is my system." In city schools, where family moving is perennial, it may be necessary to have a system which will allow for such fittings. Even city systems are beginning to realize that such a static system can not educate in the real sense of the word.

Moreover, in the city the teacher has probably but one grade to teach; in many instances she has but one section of a grade to teach. Her duties are solely those of teacher to this group of children. It is possible to devote each minute of the day to the needs of her pupils and, as each child is at approximately the same stage of advancement, the number of recitations are diminished. With the lessening of the number of classes, it is possible to lengthen the recitation period. Therefore, it is again possible for the teacher to develop a more elaborate system of teaching procedure and, in the second place, to cover more subject matter.

In the rural schools of five grades, at least 25 recitation periods are found on the program. The periods must be short, the opportunities for assisting pupils in study or in other forms of work is almost entirely eliminated. Therefore there should be a different form of organization. The pupils in the rural schools should be placed in groups rather than grades. The course of study should be flexible enough to permit opportunity for many excursions in science and history which should be in answer to the many demands of the community. The possibility of a more flexible method of conducting or disciplining a rural school should
be permitted. The general plan developed by Mrs. Johnson at Fairhope, Alabama, should be adapted to the needs of the rural schools. The older types of rural schools furnished many of these opportunities which have been eliminated from the later schools.

Modern methods of teaching require a long period for the development of the material of the lesson. I was recently told of a supervisor who gave a demonstration lesson in reading for her teachers. It took this teacher forty minutes to develop three points in the lesson. There would hardly be any question concerning the value of the lesson presented, but the teachers of the rural schools can not use such a method of teaching. Their program would not permit it. Most of the books written on rural pedagogy follow in detail the methods of teaching as used in city school systems. It is probably well to ask the question whether the same principles do not underlie all forms of the teaching process. Why shall not the same method be used? There should be developed a modified recitation which will fit the needs of the rural schools. There is much needed a teacher who understands the teaching process in all of its complications, and who has at the same time a broad knowledge of the philosophy of education, and of the particular needs of the rural schools, who will develop a teaching method which would meet the rural situation. Such a book should furnish many illustrative type lessons and units of material.

Much of the work of the groups in a rural school should be carried on independently of the teacher. There should be a type of lesson which would introduce a group to a special problem, project, or whatever name this lesson should receive. Then the class should be allowed to work independently, gathering material, organizing it, etc. This should be checked up by a second type of lesson which would furnish evidence of the progress of the work, the direction that was being followed, and the special needs of the class. This would probably be followed by a drill lesson on spelling, if that was the particular weakness demanding attention, or sentence structure, or organizing an outline, or even some work on one of the fundamental processes in arithmetic. A second lesson would search out with the class some technical knowledge which they were unable to secure. It might be that the teacher would need to help the class to clear up their thinking, which might have gone off on a pleasant excursion in a side path. After some further research the class should be able to place before the teacher and the school the results of their several days of work.

This type of teaching requires first of all a more flexible course of study than we have at present. This should be stated in terms of minimum essentials in subject matter. This subject matter should be arranged in a form which would permit a tabulation of the material studied under each project, and which could check with the course of study. For example, a project recently worked in one district in Rockingham County was the history of each school. The pupils had to gather material, they had to classify this material; they had to organize and put these facts in a permanent written form. Through this study the following parts of the course of study in English in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades were covered.

- Sentence structure
- Outline, writing from an outline
- Spelling
- Correct use and choice of words
- Penmanship
- Local History

Besides this there was further opportunity for developing the power of judgment.

Such a study of accomplishments would show that the amount of formal material to be covered was relatively small; that one project would cover a great deal of it; that interest was sustained without effort; that the children improved very much in many of the so-called tool subjects.

b. Selection of Teacher

All that has been said concerning the reorganization of the school into groups, the method of teaching, and the course of study depends upon a teacher's having a broad foundation for her work as well as special fitness for teaching in the rural schools. This teacher needs a fine high school course, and then she needs graduation from a normal school which has the interest of the rural elementary schools at heart.

In addition to her training there are two necessary factors required in this teacher. First that she may have the right apprecia-
tion of rural life. She herself must be happy and at ease in the country—bred in the country, but buttered on one side in the city. She must believe in rural development. Besides this, she must have had sufficient experience as a teacher to be able to estimate the value of the work she is doing. She must be able to determine when her groups need some excellent drill on multiplication tables, and when they need to be stimulated to further investigation of their community. The price of this teacher should be above rubies, because it is through such teachers that the rural districts of our state shall become the most progressive and the most intellectual. There should be every effort made to have such a teacher remain in the school district for several years. If such teachers can be secured in no other way, the state should select such graduates from rural schools as have the requirements for a good teacher, and give them the necessary education to meet these requirements.

c. Organization of Schools

In the previous discussion I have had in mind the one- and two-teacher schools. In Virginia we have a large number of these schools, which will have to be continued because of the character of the mountain districts, and of the lower lands. However, in most parts of Virginia consolidated schools may be established. The greatest obstacle in the way for consolidation seems to be the prejudices of the communities. Therefore, before some of these schools can be organized the patrons need to have a real course in cooperation. Usually local jealousies are the causes of many failures. The advantages of consolidation are many. These have been set forth in many books on rural education.

There are also many types of consolidated schools. It may be possible to have consolidated elementary schools. These are the two- and three-teacher type. The four-teacher school may attempt the junior high school work, but it is best to have five teachers for the junior high school.

At present the state is facing the results of aspiration. Each institution is trying to take over the work of the next higher institution instead of trying to make of itself the most efficient school of the particular type. So the small rural schools are not willing to be classed as junior high schools, but are trying to give the third and fourth year of the high school. If children desire to continue their education beyond the junior high school, it is possible for them to go to a senior high school which is recognized as giving a full high school course.

V. STATE-AIDED RURAL SCHOOLS

At the time of the survey in 1919, the commission felt it was necessary that more attention be given to the rural schools of the state. About 65% of the people of this state live in rural communities. Therefore it is necessary for this state to provide some means for improving these schools. The last legislature appropriated $400,000 for the rural schools. The State Board decided to give this sum to the rural schools to assist in paying the salaries of the teachers, provided that they met certain minimum requirements which they proceeded to set up.

The requirements are as follows:

First—The building must be constructed in accordance with the law, must have proper floor space, air space, and lighting area. There must be two well-designed and well-kept sanitariums. The yard must be large enough to accommodate the school-house, but to provide reasonable playground. The school premises must be kept in neat and orderly condition. Everything conducive to good health among the pupils is urged particularly for the rural school.

Second—The teacher must have sufficient qualifications to guarantee a good type of instruction. The Department of Education is insistent upon the necessity of attracting properly qualified teachers to the rural schools. Until this condition is brought about, the instruction in the rural schools can not be of standard quality. The State Board prescribes for a standard rural school that the teacher must hold at least a first grade certificate, and higher qualification is urged.

The salary of the teacher in the standard school must be not less than $85.00 per month. This salary is fixed because it is the minimum amount for which well trained teachers can be secured. In a great many counties in the Commonwealth smaller towns are paying salaries as much as or larger than this, whereas in the rural schools the salary is very much reduced. If need be, school boards are urged to give a bonus to the teachers in the rural one- and two-room schools in order to induce the best teachers to undertake the work.

The length of term for a standard rural school must be nine months. This has long since been accepted as the standard term for city schools and for high schools everywhere. Every argument for a nine months high
school term is a stronger argument for a nine months elementary term. Of course, in some sections the term may be shortened because students are needed on the farm, but in these cases proper adjustment will be made. The main idea of the State Board is to establish just as good school terms for the rural schools as for those of any other type. In some cases the term may be fixed at nine months, with part time school work in early fall and late spring. In order that the larger boys and girls may have a chance to go to school and help on the farm at the same season.

For each one-room school which meets the standards set up by the State Board the Board will appropriate $150.00 in addition to the regular state funds. For the two-room school the appropriation is $225.00, and for the three-room school or more the added appropriation is $300.00. These sums represent an actual bonus in addition to the State funds distributed on the per capita basis.

It is the sincere hope of the Board of Education that the people in the rural sections of the state will commence to think in terms of properly equipped and properly maintained rural schools. Education can not adequately serve the people of the Commonwealth unless the standards long since accepted in our cities are applied with equal force to rural conditions.

Rachel E. Gregg

II

WHAT SOME OF VIRGINIA'S WOMEN ARE DOING

[In the first portion of this account of the various pieces of work being done by some of Virginia's women, attention was directed to suffrage work centering about Mrs. B. B. Valentine, social service work directed by Mrs. Kate W. Barrett, health work by Dr. Mary Brydon and others, and school league work under the leadership of Mrs. Beverley B. Munford.

In the concluding instalment three more movements are discussed, and in each of them a Virginia woman has taken a leading part. The Bureau of Vocations has been organized and directed by Dr. Orie L. Hatcher; agricultural and home economics club work owes a great deal to Miss Hallie Hughes, one of its pioneers; and the prohibition movement in Virginia has had as one of its leaders the president of the Virginia W. C. T. U., Mrs. Howard M. Hoge—Editorial Note.]

THE BUREAU OF VOCATIONS

Dr. Orie L. Hatcher, of Richmond, who is now head of the Bureau of Vocations there, is a graduate of Vassar, and after teaching in Richmond, went to the University of Chicago, where she took here Ph. D. For many years she was head of the department of English at the most scholarly institution for women in America, Bryn Mawr College. "Altho retaining a semi-official connection with that institution, she sacrificed the academic atmosphere to which she had been accustomed for so many years, gave up her position and fine salary to come back to Richmond and do a work which touches humanity more closely than classroom work perhaps can," says Miss Elizabeth Cleveland of her.

She is head of a unique institution, the Bureau of Vocation of Virginia, which was founded six years ago in Richmond, under her inspiration. This institution exerts a strong educational influence. It inspires women first, to the best general education possible, then to adequate special training in some one field of work wisely chosen.

In the past, women felt there was only one vocation they could make theirs—teaching. Today many people are going out of the teaching profession for various reasons. Dr. Hatcher is making a survey to find the direct cause of this condition and is not only alert to remedy it, making the teaching profession more attractive through its many needed changes, but she is having opened up to women many other vocations. Because of this survey, requests have been made by women all over the state concerning vocations which they might make theirs. The bureau is furnishing them this information. It is being done through a series of lectures given in colleges, high schools, business schools and clubs throughout the state. Educational conferences are held and personal letters are written to solve individual problems. It is working along with other educational forces to raise the general standards of education in Southern schools and colleges for women, and to increase opportunities for training.

The Bureau of Vocations was influential in opening the School of Social Science and Public Health in Richmond, in opening the Medical College of Virginia to women, in opening V. P. I. to women, and in bringing about other such changes. "At present it is interested in obtaining scholarships and loans for girls needing financial help in securing an education. Every woman's college in