ANNUAL

REPORT

OF THE

STATE SUPERINTENDENT

OF

PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

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1853.
REPORT.

STATE OF WISCONSIN.

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, Madison, Wisconsin, Dec. 31, 1852.

To the Legislature:—

It is made the duty of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to report annually to the Legislature,

"An abstract of all the Common School Reports received by him from the several Clerks of the County Boards of Supervisors;

A statement of the condition of Common Schools in this State;

Estimates and accounts of expenditures of the School Moneys;

Plans for the improvement and management of the Common School Fund, and for the better arrangement of the Common Schools; and

All such matters relating to his office and the Schools of the State as he shall deem it expedient to communicate."

In accordance with these provisions of law, I have the honor to present the FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT from this Department.

Reports have been received from thirty-three counties in the State. Within the year, School districts have been organized, and schools have been opened in the two new counties of Oconto and Wausuhara. No reports have been received from the six organized counties of Adams, Door, Kewaunee, Lapointe, and Marathon.

The whole number of children between the age of four and the age of twenty, residing in the State, is 124,783

This number is about one-third of the whole population of the State. The number reported last year was 111,431

The increase within the year has been 13,342
The number of children within the above ages constitutes the basis upon which the revenue of the School Fund is apportioned. It will be seen that, though the revenue is annually increasing, the number among whom it is to be divided is increasing still more rapidly. The proportion to each child will not, therefore, be augmented in any great degree for a term of years to come.

The number of children who have attended the public schools of the State, exclusive of those in towns from which no reports have been received, is 88,042.

The total number of attendants in all the towns is estimated at 90,000.

The following table will exhibit the whole number of children in the State, the number who have attended the public schools, and the per centage which the latter forms of the whole, for each year since the organization of the public schools under the State government:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Whole No. of children</th>
<th>No. who have attended school</th>
<th>per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>70,457</td>
<td>32,174</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>92,047</td>
<td>61,597</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>111,431</td>
<td>78,944</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>124,783</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the number of attendants at the public schools of the State, the increase in four years has been from thirty-two thousand one hundred and seventy-four to ninety thousand; from a proportion of less than one-half to one of nearly three-fourths of all the children in the State.

The whole amount of money received from all sources, is reported at $127,718 42.

Amount remaining unexpended at the commencement of the year, 5,755 37
Expended this year for teachers' wages, 105,122 83
  do. do. Libraries, 5,641 14
  do. do. other purposes, 11,981 87
Remaining unexpended, 2,622 13
THE SCHOOL FUND.

The following is a statement of the condition and resources of the School Fund, at the present time.

Due on lands sold, $631,931.71
  do. Loans, 132,491.64
In Treasurer's hands, 4,777.15

Total, $819,200.50

THE UNIVERSITY FUND.

Due on Lands Sold, $40,051.26
  do. Loans, 3,395.00
In Treasurer's hands, 1,995.58

Total, $45,441.84

These two amounts constitute the School and the University Fund. The interest at seven per cent. upon the former, is to be expended for the benefit of the public Schools; the income derived from the latter is for the use of the State University.

IRREGULAR RETURNS.

The irregularity and incompleteness of the returns received at this Department from the Clerks of the County Boards of Supervisors, have prevented more than an approximation to accuracy in the tables and statistics accompanying this report. The accounts of the receipts and expenditures of money are particularly confused and contradictory. In many instances there have been great discrepancies between the total number of children and the aggregate of males and females, reported in the same county. Other portions of the reports have been undigested masses of figures, evidently the crude estimates of clerks of districts and town superintendents, instead of the result of careful and diligent inquiry. To compile and arrange these has been a laborious task,
and the result has often been far from satisfactory. The difficulties may, in part, arise from the complex system upon which the reports are made out, and, so far, are insuperable. But many of the errors are caused by negligence, when by a slight degree of care, complete accuracy might have been attained.

It is hoped that by providing a full set of blank returns for Clerks of Boards of Supervisors, Town Superintendents and District Clerks, by simplifying the system of reporting, and by additional care on the part of those officers, the causes of complaint may be removed.

SCHOOL-HOUSES.

The whole number of School-Houses in the State, is 1730
The number erected within the present year, is 221
Of this number there have been built of brick, thirteen; of stone, nineteen; of logs, eighty-one; framed, one hundred and eight. Of the whole number in the State, sixty-six are of brick; seventy-four of stone; seven hundred and seventy-eight of logs, and eight hundred and twelve framed.

The total valuation of school-houses in the State, is $261,986 32
There has been raised by tax, within the present year, and expended in building, repairing, and hiring School-houses, the sum of $53,757 35

Of the whole number reported, there are located upon sites containing less than one acre, 1492
The number unenclosed is 1535
Destitute of Blackboards, 610
Destitute of Outline Maps, 1369

The progress already made, in providing houses for the accommodation of the schools, is highly commendable. Too much should not be expected of a new state, just entering upon the career of its prosperity—many parts of it newly settled, and laboring under the consequent disadvantages. Still much remains undone among those who cannot plead inability or poverty. Even the best of
our school-houses, with a few very creditable exceptions, are far
from being what the wants and conveniences of a school, the com-
fort of pupil and teacher, and the good of the district require.
In some of the cities and towns, capacious and elegant houses
have been constructed, and supplied with the furniture and appa-
ratus which sound experience has demonstrated to be of the high-
est importance to the advancement of a school. But many of the
structures used for the public schools are totally inadequate to the
object for which they are designed. Some, even in the thickly
settled portions of the State, are inferior to the out-buildings of
the substantial farmers of the neighborhood. Others are located
upon wide and shelterless prairies, exposed to the scorching suns
of summer and the sweeping storms of winter. The great majority
are without apparatus to illustrate the lessons of the text book,
and also without the decent provisions for the health and comfort
of the child. All these are so many difficulties in the path of the
scholar, and so many embarrassments to the labors of the teacher.

A school-house should not, in its arrangement and appearance,
continually suggest a contrast with the comforts of home. If it
does, it becomes an object of aversion instead of attachment.
Physical comfort is necessary to mental improvement. A child
cannot make progress in its studies while perched upon a high and
narrow seat; while suffering from thirst and from the extremes of
heat and cold; while oppressed by the inhalation of impure air,
and where three are crowded into the space which but one should
occupy.

The furniture of a school house should be adapted to the neces-
sities of the child. The muscles of children are flaccid, and their
systems easily exhausted by restraint. The lady must have her
cushioned seat—the man of business his easy chair. To be deprived
of these is esteemed a hardship. Yet they send their children with
out compunction, day after day, to endure weariness and fatigue,
and a system of torture that is only prevented, by the elasticity of
youth, from causing permanent deformity. The benches should
be low and wide—arranged in grades corresponding to the size of
the scholars—adapted to their comfort, and easy of access. There
should be sufficient room for each child to change its position
without disturbing the entire school—to leave and return to its
place without interrupting the studies of others.
A plentiful supply of pure and fresh water should be provided,
and no harm can arise from allowing it to be free of access to all
the scholars.
Severe cold should be tempered by convenient means for warm-
ing the apartment. A sufficient quantity of good and seasoned
fuel should be supplied. Entry-ways, to prevent the opening of
the outer door directly into the study room, and shade trees to
shelter the house, are useful adjuncts.
Another topic, to which the reasonable limits of an Annual Re-
port can do but partial justice, is that of ventilation. It is need-
less to urge that danger to the health and life of the child is so
remote and trifling as to be unworthy of consideration. The
reverse is the case. Instances are constantly occurring in which
the seeds of disease are gathered in the close and polluted air of
the school-room, and ripen into premature decay and an early
death. Many parents can call to mind the frequent complaints of
their children, who have returned from school, nervous, feverish
and pale—laboring under a depression of spirits and lassitude of
body. A passing emotion of compassion may have attributed
their appearance to confinement and study, neither of which is
productive of evil effects, unless accompanied by an atmosphere
rank with impurity, habits opposed to cleanliness and health, a
loss of comfort and necessary recreation.
In a school-room with a low ceiling, contracted in size, with no
means of ventilation, and containing from fifty to one hundred
scholars, the air—inhaled by each different pair of lungs—loses its
vital properties and becomes loaded with the impurities and in-
fection thrown off from numerous systems. To contend that there
is, in this, no danger to the health of the child, is folly. The tem-
porary symptoms of suffering may disappear with the habits which
occasioned them, but the tendencies to disease linger in the sys-
tem, awaiting some predisposing cause to develop their active strength, and hurry their victim to an untimely grave.

These statements are no exaggeration of the evil, for exaggeration is impossible. Still, the evil is allowed to exist, because its first manifestations are not in a form that appalls and terrifies. Its approach is slow and insidious. The operation proceeds in secret. At length, a frame racked with pain—a mind debilitated, unbalanced or diseased—powers of usefulness and enjoyment destroyed, are the fated results of a few years spent in the crowded and heated school room. For all these consequences, the preventive is of the simplest character. The most ordinary mechanical contrivance will ensure pure air to the child, and the natural result, health and happiness, to the man.

Every window should be so constructed that it may be lowered at the top. The impure and rarified air then rises and passes out, while a current of fresh air rushes in to supply its place. School houses should be large; the ceiling high, and the study room capacious. These arrangements can be cheaply provided. That is a costly economy which sacrifices sound health, and disregards the danger of disease to save a trifling expense.

School-houses should be healthily located. A neighboring swamp, the marshy bank of a creek or river, or a pool of stagnant water, sends forth a miasma destructive to the health of an entire school. Take, for example, two school-houses. Let one be located upon an airy eminence, kept dry, clean, and well ventilated. Let the other be indifferently located, no attention paid to influences that may affect the atmosphere, and without special provisions for health and comfort. Let the attendants at both come from the same neighborhood, and be similarly situated at home. Experience has shown that, under such circumstances, the time lost by sickness in the latter, will attain an alarming proportion, when compared with that in the former. The reason is obvious. In fact, the result could not be otherwise. With a loss of ease, a total disregard of provisions for comfort, and while inhala
ing a pestilential atmosphere, the enjoyment of bodily health is impossible.

The planting of shade trees around school-houses, especially when located upon our prairies, is a subject worthy of attention. They protect the house and the scholars alike from the hot sun, and the searching wind. But they have a purpose and effect beyond that of comfort. They adorn and beautify the house and grounds. It was a profound philosophy which led Plato to the groves and shades to discourse before his pupils upon the capacity of the soul, and the themes of death and immortality. He appreciated the effect which the beautiful in nature exercised upon the mind and temper. We should not be behind the ancient Greeks in devising means to render the lessons of wisdom attractive, and in adorning its temples with the beauties of art and the refinements of taste. Let the school-house be made a pleasant resort for the children. Let there grow up in their minds a love for the place—an affection for the scene of their sports and studies. Link it with pleasing associations. Render it desirable and alluring—a spot around which the mind, in after life, can linger with emotions of tenderness and pleasure. Let means of recreation be provided. Let the play-ground be enclosed, overspread with refreshing shade, and covered with green. The child that is happy and contented will be a studious and dutiful scholar.

Upon the subject of apparatus, less is necessary to be said. The importance of means to illustrate the lessons learned by the scholar will be appreciated by all. Some articles, among which are blackboards and outline maps, are absolutely indispensable. Yet the returns show that six hundred and ten school-houses are destitute of the former, and that but three hundred and sixty-one, out of all the school-houses in the State, are supplied with the latter.

In connection with the subject of school-houses, I have one other suggestion to offer. The School Fund of the State was created for but one object—that the public schools might keep pace with the wants of the people, and remain to their children forever
free. It should be the study of the Legislature, as the experience
of each year may indicate, to make such changes in the disposi-
tion of the Fund, that the generous designs of its founders may
be more completely fulfilled. By the present statute, the School
Fund is loaned to individuals in sums of from one hundred to five
hundred dollars, for a term of five years, (with the privilege of
extension,) at an annual interest of seven per cent. I would sug-
gest for your consideration the propriety of passing a bill, author-
izing the Commissioners of the School Fund to loan it in limited
sums, to school districts, for the erection of school-houses, the in-
terest to be paid by an annual tax. The security would be unques-
tioned, as all the taxable property in the district would be held,
not only for the final liquidation of the debt, but for the prompt
payment of the interest.

By this disposition of the School Fund, both the principle and
interest will become directly subservient to the purposes of educa-
tion—the former being devoted to the erection of school houses,
and the latter to the maintainance of teachers. It becomes, for
all practical ends, a donation to the public schools, but a donation
which is inexhaustible. All the possible benefits arising from the
use of this vast capital, accrue directly to the people for their chil-
dren, and no part is alienated for purposes of private and individual
enterprise.

TEACHERS.

The amount of money expended for teachers’ wages within the
year, is $105,082 83

Of this sum there was raised by tax 46,781 06

The average number of months during which the public schools
have been taught, is five and one-half. In the county of Kenosha,
which shows a higher average than any other county in the State,
schools have been taught during eight months in the year. In the
county of Richland, which shows the lowest average, schools have
been taught during three months in the year. The highest ave-
The average last year was seven and a half; the lowest but little over seven and one-half. The general average was five and thirty-nine hundredths months.

The wages paid to teachers, except in a few localities, are uniformly low. In some of the cities and principal villages, five hundred, six hundred, and in one instance, seven hundred dollars per annum have been paid to the principal teachers. The average price paid throughout the State to male teachers, per month, is $10 34.

In the county of Grant, which shows the highest average in the State, the sum paid is 22 74.
The lowest in any county is in Richland 10 00.
The average price paid to female teachers per month, is 8 50.
The highest price paid to female teachers in any county, is in the county of Brown, 15 00.
The lowest in any county is in Wanshara, 5 33.

As these reports, in the great majority of cases, are received from schools districts situated in agricultural sections of the State, they probably refer to the wages paid, exclusive of board, which is furnished to the teacher by the different families of the district, in rotation. Where this plan is not followed it is usual to pay the teacher six dollars per month in addition to the regular wages, and the district is relieved of all responsibility in the matter. But as the former is the most general plan, the sum of six dollars should be added to the averages above given, which will increase the amount paid to male teachers to twenty-two dollars and thirty-four cents, and to female teachers, fourteen dollars and fifty cents.

It needs neither argument nor illustration, aside from these facts, to lead the mind to a just conclusion in regard to the profession of teaching as followed in this State. The office of teacher is one of grave duties and high responsibilities. It involves the care of minds open to every influence, impressed by every object, and led by every example. The child is quick to see and ready to follow.
Its powers of observation mature before its habits of reflection and are its only guide, aside from the restraints of authority. The teacher should be circum cinct in his actions, careful in his conversation,—should possess temper and habits of a peculiar character. If deficient or unfaithful, he is unworthy of the trust. Literary qualifications, although indispensable, are not the highest requisites. He should have studied the character of childhood, and be able to mould it into form—to shape and fashion it for the future character of the man or the woman. He should be fitted to cultivate the morals, as well as the intellect,—for the teacher leaves the impress of his own mind upon the mind of the child. He plants in the susceptible understanding of youth the germ of future good or evil. The good lessons of years cannot efface principles inculcated by months of daily intercourse between the pliant child and the man confirmed in frivolity or evil. The toils and trials of a lifetime will not obliterate the lessons of truth and wisdom carefully instilled by the precept and example of the accomplished teacher.

The embarrassments of new and sparsely settled districts apparently deny them the privilege of a choice between a good teacher and a poor one. It is sometimes difficult to obtain a good teacher; at other times the district is unable to pay the price demanded. But it is not a well settled principle that a poor teacher at a low price is better than none. A district should remain entirely destitute rather than place their children under the charge of a man without the qualities essential for training the mind and instilling just sentiments. It is also a mistaken idea that a male teacher must, in all instances, be employed a portion of the year. A good female teacher is far more beneficial for any school than a poor male teacher, and can usually be employed for about the same price. In schools composed principally of small scholars, the former is particularly adapted to the charge, and should always be preferred. By employing female teachers when the condition of the school will permit, and where competent male teachers cannot
be obtained, many of the difficulties and trials of establishing good schools in new settlements will be obviated.

When good teachers can be employed no considerations of parsimony should be allowed to interfere. The cheapest teacher is usually the most expensive in the end. It is needless to cite instances of schools broken up, or their usefulness destroyed, or of districts divided in feeling and interest, as the consequences of employing incompetent and unfaithful teachers. The truth is, a good teacher, adequately compensated, is the best for a district by every consideration of the public good, true economy, and the advancement of pupils, not only in their studies, but in proper habits, sobriety and virtue.

Whatever may be the qualities and virtues of the school teacher, there are duties, the performance of which does not rest with him. He must have the co-operation of those under whose charge the children are when away from the school room. Parents and guardians should exercise a constant care over their children’s progress, and show by frequent visitations that they have interests and hopes in the welfare of the school.

The income of the School Fund is to be expended in the payment of teachers’ wages. That fund was created not only for the present, but for the future good of the State. The education of the children does less to advance the prosperity of the generation now in the vigor or decline of life, than to prepare a generation that, in years to come, will wield the destinies of the State. To this purpose our School Fund is devoted, and the medium through which it is to be accomplished is the school teacher. It is committing a wrong upon the future of our State, to squander upon unworthy objects, to waste and destroy the means provided for its enlightenment, its greatness and renown.

SCHOOL DISTRICT LIBRARIES.

One-tenth of the income of the School Fund is now devoted to the purchase of School District Libraries. Since the law, making
this provision, went into effect, the sum apportioned to the school districts of the State for this purpose, has been $10,061 22

The districts, in addition to this, have raised by tax for the same purpose 1,209 00

The total amount received and expended, is 11,270 22

The total number of volumes now contained in the district libraries of the State, is 11,975

It will be readily seen that the number of volumes in the libraries bears no proper proportion to the amount of money expended. This is the legitimate result of that system which doles out a particular per cent. of the money received by each school district, compelling its immediate appropriation, regardless of the consideration that, in many instances, the amount is insufficient for judicious expenditure. Under this law, some of the large districts have received nearly sixty dollars, while some of the smaller ones received less than one dollar. The former were thus compelled to expend a greater proportion of their apportionment from the income of the School Fund, for this purpose, than was advisable; and the latter were left with a sum entirely insufficient for practical use. It is apparent that this system of appropriation will ultimately amount to an enormous expenditure without even the prospect of ever securing good libraries to our schools. I would therefore recommend legislative action upon this subject. A very respectable school library can be procured for the sum of twenty dollars. An appropriation of ten dollars to each school district, on condition that an equal sum be raised by them, and the amount applied to the purchase of books, would secure suitable libraries in every school district of the State.

SCHOOL BOOKS.

The law makes it the duty of the Superintendent of Public Instruction "to recommend the introduction of the most approved text books, and, as far as practicable, to secure a uniformity in the use of text books in the common schools throughout the State; to
discourage the use of sectarian books and sectarian instruction in the schools, and "to advise in the selection of books for some district libraries."

I enter upon the discharge of this portion of my official duty conscious that one of the most sacred trusts that can be committed to an individual, is the recommendation of books for the use of the children of a State. From these impressions are unconsciously given to their plastic minds, which will influence them through life. On the judicious selection of school books depends much of the character of our youth, and through them of the future history of the State. The law not only makes it a duty to recommend such books as are best calculated to promote the advancement of the scholars in those branches required to be taught, but also such as are free from the taint of sectarian bias.

Impressed with the delicacy of the task, much time and attention has been given to an impartial examination of the numerous school books upon the several subjects required. I have also sought and received the counsel of eminent friends of education to aid me in my conclusions.

I have thus been enabled to select a list of books which I can recommend with the utmost confidence in their practical adoption to the necessities of our public schools. A uniformity of school books is of great importance to the prosperity of the schools of the State. This uniformity unfortunately does not now exist. A greater diversity of text books, and in many instances of an inferior or antiquated kind, probably never prevailed in any State. To correct this evil, a unison of action, on the part of those whose duty it is to prescribe books for the use of schools, is indispensable. I therefore respectfully, but earnestly, solicit the co-operation of all school district officers in the recommendation and adoption of the following series:

_Reading Books._—Swan's Primary Schools Readers, Parts 1st, 2d and 3d.

Swan’s Grammar School Reader.

Swan’s District School Reader.
A distinct exercise for advanced scholars, once or twice a week, I would also recommend the use of the American Manual, by Joseph B. Burleigh, L. L. D., and Swan’s Instructive Reader.

Swan’s Reading Books, commencing with children in the primer, and leading them by regular gradations through the entire series of five books, present a most thorough, systematic and philosophical method of teaching the art of reading.

Spelling Book.—Swan’s.
Dictionary.—Webster’s.
Geographies.—Mitchell’s Primary Geography.
   Mitchell’s School Geography and Atlas.
   Mitchell’s Geographical Question Book.
Arithmetics.—Intellectual Arithmetic, Colburn’s.
   Written do. Ray’s.

Colburn’s Intellectual Arithmetic is a work that has been long and extensively used in nearly every state in the union. There are many works of more recent issue, upon this subject, intended to supply the place which this little volume has so successfully occupied, but none, I think, equal it in merit.

Algebra.—Ray’s
Geometry.—Davies’ Practical.
Astronomy.—Smith’s (quarto.)
Grammar.—Green’s First Lessons in Grammar, [new edition.]
   Green’s Analysis of Language.

I think these two books incomparably better adapted to the present wants of our schools than any other works on the subject with which I am acquainted.

Analysis of Words.—McEligott’s Manual.
Histories.—Parley’s First Book of History.
   Goodrich’s History of the United States, (new edition, with questions.)

Botany.—Wood’s.
Natural Philosophy.—Johnston’s.
Chemistry.—Johnston’s Turner’s Elements.

If the above named books could be universally adopted in the
public schools of the State, to the entire exclusion of the heterogeneous mass now inflicted upon our scholars, incalculable good would be the result.

COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL.

As an efficient auxiliary in perfecting the system and securing the success of public instruction, an educational journal is of vast importance. Such a publication would serve as a medium through which the State Superintendent could communicate with the teachers and friends of education in the State. All important decisions of this Department, of general application, would there be printed. In such a form, being accessible to all, they would prevent the frequency of appeals involving the same questions of right and wrong. The decisions already made by this Department amount to a large manuscript volume. They are now known only to parties interested in each individual case, or to those who have taken occasion to examine the records of this office. Many of them are of such a nature as to settle principles upon which new appeals are daily made from different counties, or even from adjoining school districts. In addition to this, the inhabitants of school districts meet with great difficulties in obtaining copies of laws passed by the different legislatures, in relation to the public schools. As a consequence, embarrassing suits and appeals arise, involving the loss of time, and incurring expense which a general publication of the laws and decisions would have prevented.

A School Journal, sent by authority into every school district, would tend to awaken a general interest in the progress of education. If bound at the end of each year, and placed in the district library, it would not only be of present service, but would form a valuable historic record of the progress of education in the State.

Such publications have been established in other states, and the result has been highly satisfactory. Their influence has proved salutary in effecting an understanding among those engaged in education, in securing unity of action, and in bringing the power-
ful aid of the press to assist in preparing for usefulness the rising generation.

I would respectfully recommend that the State Superintendent be authorized to procure the printing of such matter upon educational subjects, in periodical form, as may be requisite to meet these necessities.

SCHOOL LAWS.

Our School Laws are conflicting, voluminous and complicated. Complaints are constantly being received from different portions of the State, urging the necessity of their revision. Many suits are now pending against school district officers, and the number is daily increasing, principally arising from a misunderstanding of the real meaning and intent of the law.

One year ago, I called the attention of the Legislature to this subject. I now beg leave to refer you to that communication. (Appendix B.)

The experience of the past year has confirmed my opinion that an entire revision of the School Laws of the State is absolutely necessary.

TRAVELING OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT, AND TEMPORARY NORMAL SCHOOLS.

The law makes it the duty of the State Superintendent to visit, as far as practicable, the different counties of the State, for the purpose of awakening an interest in the cause of education. In compliance with this provision, seventeen counties have been visited during the past year. In these visits an effort was made to meet as many teachers and friends of education as possible. The teachers of the counties visited were by previous notice, assembled, usually at the county seats, and temporary Normal Schools organized for one, and sometimes, two weeks. The schools were well attended, and much interest elicited. The days were occupied in
giving instruction in those branches taught in the public schools; explanations upon the most approved modes of communicating instruction; discussions upon the general system of management and government of schools; and other practical subjects of importance to teachers. The evenings were devoted to lectures upon such topics as were thought best calculated to awaken in the people a more lively interest in the cause of popular instruction.

At some of these schools there were nearly eighty school teachers in attendance. It will readily be seen that, with this number, one instructor could not do justice to the undertaking. I usually found it necessary to employ two, and sometimes three, assistants during the session. The law neither makes provision for the liabilities so incurred, nor for the organization of the schools. A bill passed one branch of the legislature, at its last session, making it the duty of the State Superintendent to hold these teacher gatherings, and providing for the payment of his assistants, but was lost in the other. To meet the deficiency in the law, the citizens in the several towns and cities in which the meetings were held, generously opened their doors for the gratuitous entertainment of the teachers during the session. The teachers, thus relieved of one burden, cheerfully contributed the amount requisite to meet the expense incident to employing necessary assistants. I have thus been enabled to carry out, in part, the original plan of these organizations, notwithstanding the embarrassment consequent upon a want of sufficient legal provisions for its full accomplishment. This effort has met with especial favor from the people of the counties visited, and the desire appeared nearly universal that legislative aid should be granted to perfect, systematize, and render it more efficient in elevating the character of our public schools.

From the experience of the past year, I am fully satisfied that temporary Normal Schools may be the means of doing more toward raising the standard of popular education in our State, than any other plan yet devised. Teachers, brought together annually,
a few weeks, under the tuition of able and experienced instructors, learn more of the science of teaching than would be acquired in months’ attendance upon ordinary academical exercises. These schools, being under the direct charge of the State Superintendent, afford him an opportunity of pointing out the defects and errors in prevailing systems of instruction, of showing the remedy, and, also, of giving his views at length, upon the whole subject of teaching. Through their means and influence teaching is brought into a science, to be pursued with industry, and improved by skill. Like other professions, it will be made the business of a life, instead of being the resort of stragglers and vagrants when deprived of other means of subsistence.

At these schools the best teachers are usually in attendance. The young in the profession mingle with those who have had the experience of years. The teachers of a county thus become acquainted, and a mutual interest, each in the welfare and success of the other is naturally awakened. All listen to the same lectures, discussions and instruction on the various plans for the improvement of schools and the elevation of the profession. Mind is brought into contact with mind—the varied experience of the elder is generously poured into the storehouse of the younger, and, having adopted uniform, approved methods of instruction, they carry them with the strength and efficacy of union, into every school district of the State.

I would therefore respectfully suggest the propriety of legislative action upon this subject.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND GRADATION OF SCHOOLS.

The desire to have a school house located near each man’s door is becoming far too prevalent. The result will be the division and sub-division of school districts to such an extent, that many will be unable to support good schools, erect convenient school houses, or provide suitable apparatus. They will thus be compelled to
hire cheap teachers, have poor houses, and content themselves with schools but a few weeks in the year.

What return is had for all this sacrifice? None, other than the meager recompense of saving to the children the walk of half or three-fourths of a mile. If Town Superintendents will cease their efforts to divide the school districts of their respective towns and, wherever practicable, consolidate them until they become large and strong enough to support good schools, have suitable houses, proper apparatus and competent teachers, they will thereby accomplish lasting good.

The importance of the classification of pupils in each school and the classification of schools wherever practicable, cannot be too highly estimated. Villages and large towns should consolidate their strength, and build commodious houses, suitable for the accommodation of separate schools. The most obvious advantages resulting from such an organization, would be the increased productiveness of the teachers’ labor without an increase of expense. Every good teacher attaches importance to a skillful arrangement of pupils in classes according to age and proficiency.

In most of our district schools, the diversity in these respects is so great, that classes can be but imperfectly formed. The object of gradation is to classify the schools themselves, placing the younger children in one department, those more advanced in their studies and of mature age in the other. With this arrangement, the appropriate teacher, whether male or female, can be assigned to the respective departments, and each be enabled so to classify the school in charge, that no time will be trifled away with the multiplicity of classes and individual recitations.

One other arrangement will perfect this gradation, and mature our public school system. A third grade of schools, as the connecting link between the district school and the State University, is indispensable. The organization of town high schools does not seem to be adapted to our sparse population or the necessities of the inhabitants of this State. But a county institution of that character, for the benefit of the advanced scholars of the entire
county, will equally meet the provisions of the constitution, and better supply the wants of our people. A uniform method of examination would determine who were fitted to enter it as graduates from the district schools. Such an institution would be appropriately denominated a County High School. There the youth could be fitted for the State University, or acquire a proficiency in the branches necessary to the pursuits of active life—could prepare for a trade, for commerce or agriculture. The public schools of the State would then comprise, the primary and secondary departments of the District School; the County High School, and the State University.

This renders the system complete. It provides means by which every child in the state, for all time to come, may acquire a free education in each branch of knowledge, from the simplest to the highest.

The people of our State are heterogeneous in their origin.—Nearly every nation upon the globe has its representatives among us. They meet upon our soil, speaking strange languages, entertaining conflicting prejudices, moved by opposite aims. These diverse elements must be combined; hostile views must be reconciled, general amity inculcated. Trade and intercourse may accomplish much, but the education of the youth will establish permanent harmony and identity of interests.

Education does more than this. It corrects public sentiment. It inspires public truth and honor. It creates a wholesome regard for the laws. It is a cheaper system of jurisprudence than courts and penalties. The teacher can better protect the peace of the community than the sheriff. The school house is a more efficient preventive of crime than the prison. Education softens the asperities of character. It infuses kindness into social intercourse. It tempers the fierceness of dispute and the strife of parties. It purifies the motives and exalts the aims of life,—for to improve the understanding corrects and enlarges the heart.

The education of the rising generation is an object for which all
can unite their labors. It is common ground, upon which all sects and parties can meet, oblivious of rival interests and jealous fears. Our system is free from sectarian or partizan influences. It is under the protection of no party in church or state. It interferes with no religious creed or political platform. Each party shares in its fruits,—for it ripens the judgment and sharpens the faculties;—it brings to each an improvement of talents, an addition of intellectual resources;—it instils a nobler motive for exertion, and causes a more zealous emulation for success.

Its benefits are restricted to no class or condition. The lowliest have the same rights as the highest. The free school is a republic, where poverty is not a stain—where rank and wealth constitute no title to excellence—where honor is the reward of merit.—Thus Free Education to All may be appropriately inscribed upon the emblem of our State—its present glory, its future hope.

To accomplish all the good results of this educational system, enlightened, consistent and just legislation is necessary. The interests of one hundred and twenty-five thousand children of Wisconsin demand this at your hands. They have no agents to beleaguering the Capitol. They have no favors to bestow—no requitals to offer. They but plead their necessities and desires. Relying upon the justice of their cause, they ask a faithful discharge of your high trust as their guardians and protectors.

AZEL P. LADD,
Superintendent of Public Instruction.
APPENDIX B.

COMMUNICATION OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

OFFICE OF STATE SUPERINTENDENT. 

MADISON, February 16, 1852.

To the Legislature of Wisconsin:

In examining the returns from the several counties in the State preparatory to apportioning the income of the school fund to the different "Towns, Cities and Wards," it is found that twelve counties have failed, either in whole or in part, to comply fully with the statute upon that subject necessary to entitle them to their proportion of the fund. A strict investigation into the causes of this failure renders it obvious that it has arisen from the complicated character of the school law—it having been differently construed in different counties—and a want of unison of each individual portion with the whole structure, as well as a variance of some portions with express, constitutional provisions. Sections fourth and fifth, article tenth, of the constitution, provide that "each town and city shall be required to raise by tax annually, for the support of common schools therein, a sum not less than one half the amount received by such town or city respectively, for school purposes from the income of the school fund." "Provision shall be made by law, for the distribution of the income of the school fund among the several towns and cities of the State, for the support of common schools therein, in some just proportion to the number of children and youth, resident therein, between the ages of four and twenty years, and no appropriation shall be made from the school fund, to any city or town for the year in which
said city or town shall fail to raise such tax, nor to any school
district for the year in which a school shall not be maintained at
least three months.'

It is obvious that, by the fourth section of the constitution above
cited, each town or city must annually raise by a tax, a sum equal
to one half the amount received by such town or city from the
income of the school fund. It would seem however, that legisla-
tion is necessary in order to carry into effect the constitutional
provision, the language being, "each town and city shall be
required," &c.

There does not appear to be any law declaring that "each town
and city" shall raise the money required by this provision of the
constitution. By section two, chapter twelve of title four revised
statutes, the qualified electors of "each town" are authorized at
any legal meeting thereof, to vote to raise such sum for the support
of common schools, "in addition to the amount required by law,
to be raised as they may deem necessary." There being no law
requiring the towns to exercise their powers in voting or levying
any specific tax there might, strictly speaking, be some difficulty
in raising a sum of money "in addition" to an ideal amount, that
never did exist. These points are based upon the opinion that the
law requiring the Board of Supervisors to "estimate and deter-
mine the amount of money to be raised in each town and ward in
their county," has no effective force.

It is difficult to perceive how a town can be said to levy a duty
on the property of individuals, when in its corporate capacity it
is not permitted to examine as to the amount proper or necessary
to be "raised by tax," nor even the judgment of its officers called
into action upon the subject. Should it be urged that the chair-
man of the Board of town Supervisors, acts for his town in this
matter, while sitting in the county board, it is answered that when
he takes his seat in the county Board, his duties as a town officer
for the time being, cease. The constitution requires each town and
city to do this, not that the county Board of Supervisors shall do
it, and direct the towns and cities to perform the mere ministerial
duty, of carrying out on paper, the proportionate amount which each property holder shall pay. When the constitution provides that a particular person or body shall be required to do a specific thing, can the legislature confer that power on any other person or body? If constitutionally the power in connection with this tax, is exclusively vested in the towns and cities, no legal enactment can divest them of that right or confer it upon the Board of county Supervisors, and any act by such Board in the premises, would be void. If the framers of the constitution intended to confer this power upon the counties instead of the towns and cities it is somewhat singular that counties are passed unnoticed, while towns and cities are named.

However the constitutional question may be, it is obvious that the law should be plain and unmistakable in its terms. The people ought not to be compelled to pay taxes without receiving the corresponding benefit intended.

The constitution declares that the income of the school fund shall be distributed among the several “towns and cities” of the State, while the law requires that the State Superintendent shall apportion the amount of school moneys to be distributed among the “several counties of the State, and the share of each county among its respective towns and cities.”

It appears that on the examination of the returns from the different clerks of the Boards of Supervisors, that in some instances, the Board have “estimated and determined” an amount for the whole county, equal to half the sum of the school fund received by said county, but in laying the per cent on the taxable property of the county, it so fell upon the different towns and cities, that those towns having the largest number of children between the ages of four and twenty years, and consequently, having received a large apportionment from the school fund, have not assessed an amount equal to one half of said apportionment, therefore are not entitled to an apportionment the present year. If in accordance with the statutes, the State Superintendent apportions to such counties the whole amount to which it would appear by the certif-
ate of the clerk of the Board of Supervisors, they are entitled then, in subdividing it among such towns only as have complied with the law, by levying a sufficient tax, there would be a surplus left to the county treasury, not provided for.

Having made the apportionment to the county, this surplus would be beyond the control of the Superintendent; and in such case, the money withheld from the delinquent towns, could not, as required in case of towns failing to assess the necessary tax, "be added to the principle of the school fund."

It is plain, therefore, that in following the statute, and apportioning first to the counties, we not only do more than the constitution demands, but, also place ourselves in a position where we cannot comply with that portion of the statute above cited. These delinquent towns have shown their willingness to comply with the requirements of the law by promptly assessing such tax as has been "estimated and determined" by the county Board. Beyond this, they have no discretion. Many of them have raised, by tax an additional amount, which if added to the sum directed by the county Board, would make a total greater than required to entitle them to their share of the apportionment. There is now no law by which this act of the towns, is required to be made known to this Department; even if there was, it could not avail them, since another statute distinctly provides that "the Superintendent shall not apportion any of the State School Fund" to such counties as have not through their Board of supervisors directed the necessary amount to be raised.

Under all the circumstances, justice would seem to demand, that special enactment should grant relief to these towns, by permitting them to certify to this Department such additional sum of money, as have been raised by them for the support of common schools, and in those cases where this amount is not sufficient, to allow them immediately to assess a sufficient sum to entitle them to their proportion of the School Fund.

Such a law cannot act prejudicial to the other towns, inasmuch as the amount due to such towns as have made the required
return, might be apportioned to them without waiting the result in relation to the proposed enactment, since a failure to comply with its provisions, would only make the money intended for the delinquent towns, a part of the principal—the same as if no legislation had been had. It may not be improper here to remark, that the counties above-referred to, are among the oldest and most populous in the State. Other counties, instead of regulating the amount to be raised by a certain per cent, upon the whole taxable property in all the towns, thereby making it uniform throughout the county, “estimated and directed” an assessment upon the different towns, just equal to half the amount received by each town from the School Fund, regardless of the valuation of taxable property in said towns.

By so doing, they have placed themselves in a position where they cannot comply with the forty-fourth section, chapter fifteen of the Revised Statutes, which reads, “Whenever there shall have been no distribution of school money to any town or ward in any year, the county Board of Supervisors shall, at their annual meeting in that year, direct to be raised on the valuation of taxable property in such town or ward, the same per centage or proportionable amount of taxes for the support of common schools therein, as shall be required to be raised for the purpose, in the other towns of such county.” It is obvious that these counties having been governed by no particular per centage—no two towns in the county bearing the same per centage—in estimating the amount of tax to be assessed in the several towns, cannot direct to be raised on the valuation of the taxable property in such town or ward, the same per centage, or proportionable amount of taxes, as is required to be raised for that purpose in the other towns in the county, and levy it on the taxable property of the town, which did not, the previous year, receive a portion of the school money. Other portions of the law are equally impracticable.

A School Law, which, either from its complication or want of harmony—each portion with the whole,—is so susceptible of vari-
ous constructions as to be differently administered in different counties, cannot produce a salutary influence on the common school system, and should, consequently, be revised. I would therefore, respectfully suggest the propriety of some suitable person being appointed to revise and codify the whole school law and report the same to the next legislature for their approval.

AZEL P. LADD.
Superintendent of Public Instruction.