

**PROGRESS IN GRAMMAR
SCHOOL EDUCATION IN
MASSACHUSETTS. THIRD
ANNUAL REPORT COMMITTEE
ON EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649237333

Progress in Grammar School Education in Massachusetts. Third Annual Report Committee on educational progress by Various

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Mass. Teachers Assn.

PROGRESS

IN

GRAMMAR SCHOOL EDUCATION

IN

MASSACHUSETTS.

*THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS.*

NEW BEDFORD:
E. ANTHONY & SONS, PRINTERS.
1887.

PROGRESS

IN

Grammar School Education in Massachusetts.

In the year 1884 your committee, in its first annual report, gave a general survey of high school education within the Commonwealth. A year later, the methods used and results secured in the primary schools passed under review. In order to complete the comprehensive view of our system of public schools which was contemplated at the beginning of the committee's efforts, there remained to be examined the field of grammar school work. To compass this task is the aim of the present report.

The method employed in ascertaining the facts upon which the opinions of the committee should rest, has been essentially the same as in the two previous reports. A circular bearing ten groups of questions relating to the subject under consideration was sent to two hundred persons, superintendents and teachers in grammar schools, with a request for an early answer. This request was emphasized by a return envelope, directed and stamped. Eighty-five replies were received, of which sixteen were for various reasons practically useless for the desired pur-

pose, though the helpful spirit of the writers was gratefully appreciated. To all these eighty-five correspondents the committee wishes here to express cordial thanks, and to acknowledge great obligation. The answers, in many cases, evinced deep familiarity with the problems involved, and a clear comprehension of both the successes and the failures in the actual work of the schools. It was plainly seen that facts, not theories alone, were sought for by the committee, and a cordial response was given. In many cases the replies must have taken considerable time for preparation,—and this at a period of the school year when time is most valuable.

A second circular also, a postal bearing two questions, was sent to one hundred high school principals within the state. From this there came thirty-one replies, all of which, save one, were directly available, and for all of which the committee returns its earnest gratitude.

So much space is given to the mention of these hundred and sixteen responses for two reasons. In the first place, it is desired to throw upon them so strong a light of commendation as to emphasize very positively the darkness of silence in which another fact is passed over, namely, that one hundred and eighty-four of those addressed appear not to have made any response. But in the second place, and chiefly, it is desired that the Association should observe that the burden of this report is not the opinion of two or three men, but the consensus of judgment of more than a hundred workers, who view the situation from three different points of observation.

BUILDINGS AND THEIR APPOINTMENTS.

In one respect all will agree that progress is constantly being made with reference to grammar schools, namely, in the character and appointments of the buildings in which they are kept. That these are more expensively built now than formerly is not saying much, but more than this is true. They are more convenient, more comfortable, and more healthful than of old. There is more thought given to lighting, heating, ventilation and drainage in all parts of the state that have come under our view.

This improvement appears most conspicuous in the new buildings which have recently been erected, but is not wholly there. Again and again there are reported extensive improvements in older buildings, in which the object has been not merely to keep them habitable, but also to improve the physical condition of instruction and render the school-room a better means of healthy growth in all right directions.

Hence we hear of changes from the old-fashioned wood-stoves to those burning coal, from stoves of any sort to furnaces and hot-air pipes, and again from furnaces to steam-heat by direct or by indirect radiation or by a combination of both. The overwhelming balance of opinion seems to favor the last of these for school purposes, in buildings of considerable size.

Closely connected with these improvements are those relating to ventilation. The line of evolution in this respect seems to be from the old red school-house, with its superabundance of communication with outside air, to the tightly built box of a room, whose windows and doors

must be open if there is any ventilation. The next stage is that in which ventilating flues are built and small openings made at the top or the bottom of the room, and the air is thus mildly invited to pass up and out. Still again, this flue is so placed in connection with a warm-air pipe, or is so heated at bottom or top by gas jet or by steam coil, that a stronger invitation is applied to the foul air to depart. In still further improvement, where the circumstances warrant, a fan is planted in an effective position, and, running by steam or water-power, fairly collars the intruding atmosphere and ejects it from the premises. It must be confessed that in ventilation it is "not as though" Massachusetts schools have "already attained, either" are "already perfect; but we follow after." There is a determined spirit in public sentiment which is leading to constant effort for better things. Our changeful climate requires a most elastic system of heating and ventilation, one that will not be dependent on the weather, and will keep the inner air warm in winter, cool in summer, and fresh and healthful at all times. The requirements of school-room ventilation appear to be, in brief, these: that the air come from a pure source, and be sufficient in quantity; that it be for a large part of the year warmed, but not over-heated, before its admission into the room; that it be so distributed on entrance that it shall be utilized before it reaches the top of the room; that it be not entrapped in the top of the room; and that the air-supply, ventilation and means of cooling be independent of doors and windows. This is the ideal. The committee is not prepared, however, to point out an instance of its complete realization.

In sanitation, the progress so evident in public sentiment has not passed by the schools. Great care is taken to connect all new buildings with competent systems of drainage, where they are available, and rarely is one built without attention to modern sanitary devices and methods. Old and careless methods of dealing with the troublesome phases of this matter are giving place to more intelligent views. Water-closets and similar conveniences seem to be most satisfactory when placed outside the building and approached from the basement play-rooms by a covered way. The moral tone of the school is so much affected by the care taken in these matters, that we cannot rest comfortably upon present attainments. There is still very much to be done. Multitudes of older buildings need vigorous examination and improvement before our school-buildings as a whole shall be models of sanitation.

In passing, let us hope that the popular interest in improved heating, ventilation and sanitation, to which allusion has been made, may soon result in helping the schools in another and much needed way. — by sending the pupils to school from better homes. For some of them are sadly handicapped in the race of life before they reach the school door, because of the foul and unwholesome rooms which they call home.

*TEXT-BOOKS AND OTHER SCHOOL APPLI-
ANCES.*

In respect to the appliances of the school-room more directly connected with instruction, recent times have seen a great advance. From every side come commendations of the Free Text-Book law. In the inauguration of it, an occasion was presented for revision of lists in use that was generally embraced with good results. In some communities a practice exists in the school committee of scanning the list carefully once each year at an appointed time. Changes are then made for adequate reasons, but not simply from external stimulation, as often happens. It is a question of opinion, on which opinions differ much, whether the later text-books used in grammar schools are marked improvements upon former ones or not. Some of the replies speak enthusiastically in favor of the new ones; one has grave doubts whether the books now in use are superior to those used ten years ago; still another pronounces the arithmetics, geographics and readers better, but the histories and grammars worse. The latter two writers are both masters in city schools. The general feeling, however, is that on the whole, text-books, when rightly used, were never so valuable helps in instruction as to-day, and that the prospect looks even brighter for the future.

In the furnishing of means of illustration for grammar school work, there has been a gratifying stride forward. Public opinion has in most communities nearly overtaken the teachers in this regard. Everywhere increased appropriations for this purpose are reported, and in many places