

**REPORT OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF
EDUCATION FOR PORTO
RICO, 1911; PP. 175-253**

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REPORT OF THE

COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION
OF PORTO RICO. *Dept. of Education*

1911

From the Report of the Governor of Porto Rico, 1911, pages 175-254, inclusive

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
 OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER,
 San Juan, P. R., August 10, 1911.

Sir: I have the honor to submit herewith my annual report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1911.

The statistical tables presented cover the fiscal year only, but, in accordance with custom and the instructions of the Secretary of War, in the text are treated matters of educational interest to the date of the submittal of the report.

In further conformity with such instructions, I have the honor to present herewith a summary of statistics of public education in Porto Rico, following the definite questions asked.

Summary of statistics for the school year 1910-11.

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Number of different pupils actually enrolled in all schools, including special schools: | |
| White— | |
| Males..... | 64,675 |
| Females..... | 45,142 |
| Total..... | 109,817 |
| Colored— | |
| Males..... | 20,812 |
| Females..... | 14,896 |
| Total..... | 35,708 |
| White and colored— | |
| Males..... | 85,487 |
| Females..... | 60,038 |
| Total..... | 145,525 |
| Number of different pupils enrolled during the year: | |
| (a) In secondary schools (normal and agricultural departments of the university, high and continuation schools)..... | 1,026 |
| (b) In common schools..... | 128,453 |
| (c) In special schools (night schools, kindergartens, and charitable and correctional institutions)..... | 15,528 |
| Average daily attendance for the school year of 175 days (in night schools 136 days)..... | 103,102 |
| Average daily enrollment for the school year of 175 days (in night schools 136 days)..... | 113,008 |
| Number of buildings in use for schools during the year (town, 163; rural, 879)..... | 1,042 |
| Estimated value of all insular school buildings ¹ | \$759,414.51 |
| Rental value of other buildings..... | \$67,977.72 |

¹ Including entire expenditure made by the insular government under direction of the department of education in connection with the acquisition of property and with the erection of school buildings since the establishment of civil government.

Number of different teachers employed in the common schools at the end of the year:

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| White— | |
| Males | 772 |
| Females | 675 |
| Total | 1,447 |
| Colored— | |
| Males | 114 |
| Females | 104 |
| Total | 218 |
| White and colored— | |
| Males | 886 |
| Females | 779 |
| Total | 1,665 |
| Number of different teachers employed in secondary schools at the end of the year ¹ | 72 |
| Number of different teachers employed in special schools at the end of the year ² | 255 |
| Monthly salary of teachers as fixed by law during the year 1909-10: | |
| Rural teachers— | |
| First class | \$40 |
| Second class | \$35 |
| Third class | \$30 |
| Graded teachers— | |
| First class | \$55 |
| Second class | \$50 |
| Third class | \$45 |
| English graded teachers— | |
| First class | \$60 |
| Second class | \$55 |
| Third class | \$50 |
| Principal teachers— | |
| First class | \$80 |
| Second class | \$75 |
| Third class | \$70 |
| Teachers of English and special-work teachers | \$75 |
| Continuation teachers | \$83.33 |
| To which amounts were added allowances for house rent as follows: | |
| Rural teachers | Not less than \$3 nor more than \$8 |
| Graded teachers | Not less than \$7 nor more than \$15 |
| English graded and principal teachers | Not less than \$10 nor more than \$15 |
| Total expenditures for school purposes, 1910-11: | |
| By Insular Government | \$878,635.00 |
| By local government | \$403,691.57 |

It has been the aim of the department of education, during the four years of my incumbency as commissioner, to accomplish the following results:

First. To provide instruction in the branches comprising a common-school education to all the children of school age in the island, this instruction to be both in English and in Spanish.

Second. To provide facilities for instruction in agriculture to the largest possible number of the pupils of suitable age.

Third. To introduce the subjects of manual training and domestic science into all the high and graded schools.

Fourth. To establish secondary schools at a sufficient number of points throughout the island to meet the needs of the people.

Fifth. To establish trade schools throughout the island.

The foregoing aims have been realized to a varying degree, yet a reasonable degree of progress has been made in each.

¹ Seventeen of these are duplicates.

² Two hundred and thirty-seven of these are night-school teachers and are duplicates.

The average daily attendance, perhaps the more vital of all general schools statistics, for the school year 1906-7, the year preceding the first of my term of office, was 44,218. As shown by the table given above, it was for the past year 103,102, or an increase of 133 per cent. This increase in common-school attendance during the last four years seems all the more striking from a comparison of the actual daily attendance with the schools at the beginning of the American occupation and at the end of the first nine years, i. e., in the school year 1906-7.

At the former date mentioned the attendance was 18,243; at the latter, as has been stated, it was 44,218, giving an increase for the nine years, roughly, of 25,000. During the last four years the actual numerical increase has been nearly 60,000, or more than double that of the preceding nine years. Of the 103,000 in daily attendance—the total enrollment for the past year was 145,525—at least 100,000 are in grades below the high schools and are doing work essential to good citizenship in any land which boasts of a democratic form of government.

For reasons which have been hard to overcome and which have largely to do with legislative appropriation, progress during the past quadrennium in the extension of agricultural education has been less marked. An attempt to secure adequate appropriations for the establishment of a system of elementary agricultural schools throughout the island failed. At present, however, the more than 80,000 pupils enrolled in the rural schools of the island are receiving instruction in nature study, which is essentially elementary agriculture, carried on in connection with the school gardens which form a common adjunct to the rural schools. In addition to this, nearly 2,000 pupils, mostly in the graded schools, are receiving definite instruction in scientific agriculture under the tutelage of special teachers. For the coming school year a larger number of instructors in agriculture has been provided in the budget, and at least double the present number of pupils receiving special instruction in the subject can be provided for. As properly qualified teachers can be secured, provision for agricultural instruction should be made in each municipality of the island.

At the time of my arrival on the island, four years ago, no provision whatsoever was made for any form of manual instruction in any of the public schools of the island. A system of trade schools situated in the larger cities had been in existence, but the Insular Legislature failed to appropriate for their future support and they were suppressed with the school year 1906-7. All attempts on my part to secure special appropriation for the establishment of manual instruction have failed, and what has been accomplished has been brought about through the use of the general funds of the department. In this way some form of manual instruction has been provided in nine municipalities of the island. Although for the coming year the number will be increased to 20, even this provision is entirely inadequate. The public-school system of Porto Rico can never become what it should until agricultural and manual instruction are given the proper emphasis.

In no other phase of educational work has development been so rapid during recent years as in that of secondary instruction. For the school year 1906-7 there were enrolled in the secondary schools of the island 316 pupils; for the past year 1,144, or an increase of 262 per cent.

In each of the 15 such schools some form of manual instruction will for the coming school year be offered, and in a large majority of the schools courses in both wood-working and domestic economy will be given. Those secondary schools which offer the full four-year course send their graduates on certificates to many of the best colleges and universities in the United States.

The establishment of trade schools under the auspices of the department of education is something for the future, though I hope for the immediate future. The Porto Rican people are as a class skillful and adept in the constructive arts, and the island is in need of skilled citizens and mechanics. It is possible that through placing the College of Mechanic Arts of the University of Porto Rico on a proper basis this need can be partially taken care of. However, it is my belief that the legislature should make at the earliest possible moment adequate provision for the establishment of a system of trade schools under the department of education.

In closing this letter of transmittal, I wish to express my sincerest appreciation of the valiant services rendered the cause of education in the island by the members of the office force of the department, and especially of the invaluable services of the assistant commissioner, Mr. F. E. Libby.

Respectfully,

E. G. DEXTER,
Commissioner of Education.

THE GOVERNOR OF PORTO RICO,
San Juan, P. R.

RÉSUMÉ OF THE ORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN PORTO RICO.

The organic act for Porto Rico provides:

"That the commissioner of education shall superintend public instruction throughout Porto Rico, and all disbursements on account thereof must be approved by him, and he shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by law, and make such reports through the governor as may be required by the Commissioner of Education for the United States, which shall annually be transmitted to Congress."

Beginning with the legislative session of 1900, school laws have been passed and from time to time amended, the present organization being, briefly, as follows:

The commissioner of education, appointed for a term of four years (or at the pleasure of the President), is at the head of the department of education, with full power of appointment over all the subordinates in the department, with the exception of certain classes of teachers as hereinafter set forth. He is empowered to determine the course of study, the length of the school year (within limitations prescribed by law), and the length of the school day. He is in charge of the examination and certification of teachers, and no expenditures of public moneys for school purposes, either on the part of the school boards or of any subordinates in the department, can be made without his approval. He is a member of the Executive Council—the upper house of the legislature—and is ex officio president of the University of Porto Rico and of the trustees of the Insular Library.

Aside from the teaching force, the personnel of the department consists of the following officials: Assistant commissioner of education, secretary of the department, chief of the division of property and accounts, chief of the division of school-board accounts, 3 general superintendents of schools, and 40 supervising principals, each in charge of a district of the island. In addition, there are the private secretary to the commissioner, and other clerical help to the number of 12.

The assistant commissioner is the head of the division of supervision, and has all the powers of the commissioner during the absence of the latter from the island. The secretary is the chief of the division of records, and officially countersigns all teachers' certificates and other papers of record issued by the department. The chief of the division of property and accounts is custodian of all the property belonging to the department and is charged with keeping the salary list thereof. The chief of the division of school-board accounts forms the direct point of contact between the department and the school boards of the island.

The island of Porto Rico contains 66 units of political organization, known as "municipalities." Within each of these is elected a school board consisting of three members. Vacancies in these school boards caused by resignation, death, or incapacity are filled by the commissioner of education, the law requiring that appointments to vacancies be made from the same political party to which the previous member belonged. School boards have charge of all buildings occupied by the common schools (not high schools), employ the janitors, and pay the house rent of the teachers. They have the power to hold title to property, and may, under certain legal restrictions, negotiate loans. They may, with the approval of the commissioner of education, as may also the supervising principals, dismiss pupils from the schools, and may suspend teachers pending the action of the commissioner. They must submit annually, three months before the beginning of the school year, to the commissioner of education for his approval, a list of teachers, properly qualified, whom they wish to elect to positions in their school system, and after the approval of the commissioner may elect such teachers. School boards submit to the commissioner of education, previous to the beginning of each fiscal year, a detailed statement of their desired expenditures for that year, and the approval of such a budget by the commissioner is the warrant for the expenditure of the school funds as thus set forth. Subsequent transfers of funds from one subhead to another within the budget necessitates separate approval.

The teachers of the island are divided into the following classes:

First. Rural teachers. These are in charge of the ungraded schools, for the most part in the rural districts, and receive salaries as follows: Rural teachers of the first class, \$40 per school month; of the second class, \$35 per school month; and of the third class, \$30 per school month. Persons entering the corps of rural teachers must remain three years in the third class, at the end of which period they are promoted to second class if their work has been satisfactory. They may not be promoted from second class to first class until after five years of successful experience as teachers, including the three years passed as third-class teachers. Rural teachers receive a monthly allowance in lieu of house rent, varying from \$3 to \$8 per month.

Second. Graded teachers. These teachers are in charge of the graded schools in the cities and smaller centers of population. They are divided into Spanish graded

teachers and English graded teachers, although the former class is rapidly decreasing in number and doubtless within a few years will no longer exist. The academic examination for both of these classes of teachers is the same, promotion to the English graded class being through a special examination given by one of the general superintendents or a high official in the department, to determine whether or not the candidate is capable of teaching successfully all the subjects of the common-school curriculum, using the English language as the medium of instruction. When such an examination is passed an additional compensation of \$5 per school month is received. In addition to the classification of graded teachers into English graded and Spanish graded teachers, they are classified for purposes of payment, as are the rural teachers, into graded teachers of first, second, and third class. Graded teachers of the first class receive a monthly salary of \$55; those of the second class, of \$50; and those of the third class, of \$45; in each instance with the \$5 additional to those who are certified to teach in English. Still, in addition to the compensation mentioned, comes a payment by the school board in lieu of house rent varying from \$8 to \$20 per school month.

These two classes of teachers—the rural and graded—comprise the great mass of teachers in the common schools of the island. They are elected by the school boards of the various municipalities from lists submitted to the commissioner of education for his approval, as already stated. The following classes of teachers are appointed directly by the commissioner without intervention by the school boards:

First. Teachers of English. These are nearly all Americans, the great proportion graduates of colleges and normal schools in the United States. In the early years of the American occupation they were, as the name of the class would imply, teachers of English assigned to the various graded-school systems, going about from room to room giving instruction in the English language. By this plan the pupils received an hour or two of special instruction in English each day, but since all the other subjects of the curriculum were being taught in Spanish but slight progress seems to have been made in the acquisition of the English language. Consequently the plan has been modified, and at present teachers of English serve as grade teachers in the higher grades of the school system, giving instruction in all the subjects of the grade to which they are assigned, except instruction in the Spanish language. The law makes it necessary that at least one teacher of English be assigned to each municipality of the island having a graded-school system, and this under present conditions means every municipality of the island. In the larger cities a considerable number of teachers of English are in service, the total number provided for by law for the present school year being 112. The salary is \$75 per school month, without allowance for house rent.

Second. Special teachers in continuation schools. The continuation schools of the island, as explained later in this report, are special manual training and trade schools, established in 12 municipalities of the island. In each continuation school are at least two teachers, one a specialist in manual training, the other a specialist in domestic science, and each able to give the academic and scientific subjects of the first two years of the high-school course, so far as time is found for these subjects in addition to that required for manual training and domestic-science work. Special teachers in continuation schools receive a salary of \$83.33 per school month. The budget for the coming fiscal year provides for 20 such teachers.

Third. Special teachers. This class comprises teachers of music and art and kindergarten teachers. Such teachers are assigned only to the larger towns of the island. The budget provides for 16 teachers of this class, at a salary of \$75 per school month.

Fourth. Agricultural teachers. Teachers of this class are assigned to the elementary agricultural schools maintained by the department at various points throughout the island. They will receive for the year 1911-12 a salary of \$60 per calendar month, being the only class of teachers in the employ of the Government and under pay by the Government for the entire 12 months of the calendar year.

Fifth. High-school teachers. This class of teachers includes the faculties of the high schools of the island. The salaries vary from \$750 to \$1,500 per school year.

The island is at present divided for purposes of school administration into 40 districts. These districts are divided into three classes:

First. Municipalities having more than 100 schools.

Second. Municipalities having between 50 and 99 schools.

Third. Municipalities or groups of municipalities containing less than 50 schools.

There are at present of the first class, 2; of the second class, 3; and of the third class, 35. The school law provides for an automatic increase in the number of districts, since no district of the third class may contain more than 50 schools. The immediate representative of the commissioner of education in each of the school districts is the supervising principal. In districts of the first class this officer receives a salary of