

1890.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE STANDARD SYLLABUS.

(REPLIES TO CIRCULAR ADDRESSED TO EDUCATION BOARDS AND INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS)

Laid on the Table by the Hon. the Minister of Education, by Leave of the House.

PRÉCIS OF REPLIES TO A CIRCULAR ADDRESSED BY ORDER OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION TO THE EDUCATION BOARDS AND THE INSPECTORS OF SCHOOLS IN OCTOBER, 1889.

AUCKLAND.

BOARD (11th February, 1890).—Submits suggestions contained in joint report of Auckland Inspectors. The suggestions are: In schools with only one teacher omit “class subjects” and “additional subjects” at the discretion of the Inspector, and similarly omit “additional subjects” in schools with one teacher and one pupil-teacher. Let two branches of the prescribed drawing be sufficient for pass in Standard IV., Standard V., and Standard VI.

Mr. AIREY, Inspector (4th February, 1890).—Suggestions identical with those contained in the joint report.

Mr. DICKINSON, Inspector (11th February, 1890).—Require “pass subjects” and no other subjects in a school with one teacher; add geography, elementary science, and object lessons where there are two teachers. Let two branches of drawing suffice for pass in Standard IV., Standard V., and Standard VI. Let girls omit geometrical drawing. In Standard III. remove geography from “pass subjects” to “class subjects.” For history in Standard III. let reading of “Historical Reader” (alternately with reading of ordinary reading-book) suffice.

Mr. GOODWIN, Inspector (7th February, 1890).—Suggestions identical with those contained in joint report.

TARANAKI.

Mr. MURRAY, Inspector (22nd November, 1889).—Redistribute the work of the six standards so as to spread it over seven standards. Provide a programme of lessons for the classes below the First Standard class. Revise the First Standard a little, especially in arithmetic. Introduce composition and the beginnings of grammar in Standard II., instead of leaving it till the pupil is in Standard III. Give the Inspectors power to influence the teachers in the exercise of the freedom allowed to them in drawing up a course of object lessons and lessons in elementary science. Hold a conference of Inspectors and a few representative teachers. Uniform interpretation of syllabus will be secured only after an entire change in the control of inspection.

WANGANUI.

BOARD (28th November, 1889).—The question should be submitted to a conference of Inspectors.

HAWKE'S BAY.

BOARD (20th February, 1890).—A conference of the Inspectors of the colony, with one representative from each Education Board, is suggested. Girls should be relieved from one subject of study to make up for their attention to needlework.

Mr. HILL, Inspector and Secretary (27th June, 1890).—Insist on excellence in reading, writing, and number, as a condition of promotion from the preparatory class to the standard classes. Have three standards only, corresponding to Standard II., Standard IV., Standard VI., and examine the individual pupil once in two years. Recast the syllabus so as to provide different schemes of education for different districts, according to their special wants. Give Inspectors discretionary power to reduce the demands of the syllabus in its application to small schools. Drawing should not be compulsory in all schools. Let needlework be a “pass subject” for girls; encourage “cutting out” and the use of the sewing-machine. Give the Inspector power to order the re-presentation of a child after long absence. Abolish “exceptions.”

NELSON.

BOARD (11th February, 1890).—Where grammar and composition appears as a “pass subject” make it a “class subject,” and substitute for it as a “pass subject” a knowledge of common things or elementary science. Define more strictly the requirements in elementary science. Where geography is a “pass subject” make it a “class subject.” Leave the Inspector more discretion as to what work shall be reckoned as First Standard work and Second Standard work. Make needlework more prominent. Allow part of the work of inspection to be done by certificated teachers employed by the Board, under the Inspector, as assistants.

Mr. HODGSON, Inspector (2nd November, 1889).—In Standard I. leave the Inspector to decide what quantity and quality of reading and spelling shall be exacted: the demands of the present First Standard are too low in reading and spelling and in writing and arithmetic. Pupils in Standard I. should write in copybooks and be able to answer easy questions in the first four rules. Suggestions follow for making the standards rather harder than at present. The suggestions are based on the assumption that Standard II. is for children above ten, and so on. The system of examining for individual passes is vicious in the extreme, and productive of disastrous results. It sets up a paradise of dunces, on whom is now bestowed—with little profit—the inordinate attention formerly paid to the cleverer children. It has created a most undesirable breed of teachers, who may be termed “pass-hunters.” An extension of the method of class-examination to the whole syllabus is nearly all the change required. The present rule of “exception” is objectionable.

NORTH CANTERBURY.

BOARD (31st May, 1890).—Forwarding a report of a select committee. Committee recommends, “for schools with only a single teacher, reading (to include subject-matter and history), spelling and dictation, writing, arithmetic, geography, grammar and composition, needlework; with singing and drill optional, or more or less a matter of arrangement between the Inspector and the teacher.” Committee refers with approval to a memorandum prepared by Mr. Colborne-Veel, the Secretary to the Board, and Principal of the Normal School. Mr. Veel holds that intelligent teaching secures better results at examination than does the mechanical teaching which aims only at such results; that the character of the instruction depends in a far greater degree on the Inspectors than on the syllabus; and that in considering any reports made by the Inspectors the Board ought to consider also the strength of the staff of the school reported on, and not expect as much from a small school as from a large one.

Dr. ANDERSON, Inspector (14th March, 1890).—In grammar for Standard IV. omit inflections and substitute analysis of easy simple sentence, and alter syllabus for Standard V. and Standard VI. to agree with this change and to make analysis prominent. Divide English history into three periods for Standard IV., Standard V., Standard VI., and take these periods in rotation. In this way the three classes can be taught together. In the same way these classes may be taught together in geography if a preliminary course is taken by Standard III., and the whole subject divided into three sections for the higher classes. The “pass subjects” should be reading, dictation, writing, arithmetic, grammar and composition, and perhaps geography. Extend the principle of class estimates to all subjects, and exclude all percentages of passes from reports on individual schools. Modify the rule for determining passes and failures, so that failure in one subject shall be overlooked unless it is bad enough to embarrass the teaching in the class above. In a school with only one teacher omit history, science, and object lessons.

Mr. WOOD, Inspector (6th March, 1890).—Let the “pass subjects” be the three Rs, with spelling, grammar, and composition. Let the following be compulsory subjects, but not “pass subjects:” poetry, drill, singing, needlework, subject-matter of reading lessons (including history lessons). Let geography, drawing, and science be optional, depending on the number and quality of the staff and the attainments and capacity of the children. The writer thinks that where individual pass is not required the teacher is more free and vivacious in his teaching of the subject, addresses himself more to the best of his pupils, is less hampered by the desire to insure some benefit for the dull children, who nevertheless do receive some benefit. Use a good text-book of history as a reading-book: the ordinary teaching of history without book gives evidence of slovenly preparation—the facts selected with little judgment, clearness and accuracy of expression seldom aimed at, an utter want of apt illustration.

SOUTH CANTERBURY.

Mr. GOW, Inspector (16th November, 1889).—Make drawing a “class subject” instead of a “pass subject.” Begin geometrical drawing and drawing to scale in Standard V. instead of in Standard IV. Make geography a “class subject” for all standards in which it is now required for “pass.” Omit history of Standard III., and let history of Standard VI. begin with 1603 instead of with 1485. Make grammar a “class subject” instead of a “pass subject,” but let composition remain as a “pass subject.” Let “practice” for Standard IV. be “simple practice,” and “proportion” for Standard V. be “simple proportion.” Make some “class subjects” optional where there is only one teacher.

OTAGO.

Mr. GOYEN, Inspector (18th November, 1889).—Make geography a “class subject” where it is now required for “pass.” In history remove the work of Standard III. to Standard IV., and let Standard V. and Standard VI. read together where there is only one teacher. Make drawing a “class subject” instead of a “pass subject,” and exclude geometrical drawing from Standard IV. Let composition remain a “pass subject,” and grammar become a “class subject.” Prescribe a text-book of elementary science (say, Paul Bert’s “First Year of Scientific Knowledge”) for Standard IV., Standard V., and Standard VI.

Mr. PETRIE, Inspector (January, 1890).—Omit history of Standard III. For history use reading-books, and have no special examinations in the subject. Leave out part of the highest work in arithmetic, and rearrange the rest. Give more freedom in grouping consecutive classes in grammar, geography, and history. Prescribe “two, or perhaps three, alternative courses” in science. Confine the study of history within the limits of the last hundred years or so, after a very brief outline of the earlier parts. The wording of the syllabus appears to justify teachers who reduce geography to a mere knowledge of names. The spelling for Standard I. and Standard II. is too easy. Degrees of proficiency in reading should be more strictly defined: the great simplification of reading-books for successive standards of late years tends to make Standard IV. a very low standard of proficiency in reading and “comprehension.” Abolish the entire system of passing in standards, and establish a system of passing in subjects. If the present system continues, abolish “exceptions,” let “absence,” except from illness, count as “failure.”

Mr. TAYLOR, Inspector (15th January, 1890).—Let the “pass subjects” be reading (with explanation), spelling, writing, arithmetic, grammar and composition. Confine history to Standard V. and Standard VI., and treat it merely as a reading lesson. Omit geography of Standard II., and reduce the requirements for the other classes. Have a text-book of elementary science. Allow considerable latitude and liberty in the matter of grouping of classes for instruction.

SOUTHLAND.

BOARD (7th July, 1890).—Any change “should be in the direction of securing greater simplicity in the work of the various standards, and by the introduction of a uniform set of text-books for all public schools throughout the colony.”

Mr. BRAIK, Inspector (13th December, 1889).—Make drawing a “class subject” instead of a “pass subject.” Teach history in Standard V. and Standard VI. only. Reduce the quantity of the arithmetic generally. Favour the substitution of analysis for parsing. Pay more attention to the infant section of any small school. Give more prominence to elementary science. The writer thinks that if the geography syllabus were recast and his other suggestions adopted great freedom in the grouping of classes would result, with much advantage.

Mr. HENDRY, Inspector (7th March, 1890).—Agrees with Mr. Braik, except that Mr. Hendry would not go so far in curtailing the programme for arithmetic.

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W. J. HABENS.

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