

This shows that 65 per cent. of those presenting themselves obtained proficiency certificates, and 25 per cent. competency, a decrease of 2 per cent. in the former and an increase of 3 per cent. in the latter class of certificates.

*District High Schools.*—[See E.-6, Report on Secondary Education.]

*Organization.*—The control and organization of the majority of our schools leave little to be desired. The head teachers show a close acquaintance with the various details, and by precept and example endeavour to preserve a fine *esprit de corps* among the members of their staffs. The schemes of instruction are mainly of a satisfactory character, there being few cases where teachers fail to comply with regulations. It is only fitting that we should recognize the careful and thoughtful manner in which many of the schemes are drawn up, and the creditable conception which is shown of syllabus requirements.

*Classification.*—It is very gratifying to find that with few exceptions the teachers have risen to their responsibilities in this connection. Only in a very small number of isolated cases have we had to revise the promotion lists. The percentage of pupils in the preparatory classes, 35 per cent., we think is higher than should prevail in a district which has good roads and schools easy of access. We are aware that there has been a growing tendency on the part of many parents to send their children to school at a later age, but even with this handicap, we think the number in the infant classes might be somewhat reduced. We have no sympathy with the teacher who, to create a favourable impression at the examination, keeps pupils for an undue length of time in the preparatory classes. Such a course frequently leads to the growth of careless and indolent habits.

*School Buildings and Grounds.*—Many of our schools present a pleasing and attractive appearance. Clean desks, numerous teaching aids, bunches of flowers, tastefully hung pictures, and neat arrangement of furniture and apparatus must have a wholesome influence on the pupils. Occasionally, however, one sees corners with dust-covered lumber, tables and desks littered with odds and ends, and blinds torn and dilapidated. Many of the schools have neat garden-plots, and in some cases pot-plants are grown and used for decorative purposes. We hope the time is not far distant when the school and grounds will be models of neatness; for nothing is more pleasing to see than hedges neatly trimmed, garden-plots carefully kept, and grounds laid out on some definite plan. The effect of such surroundings must have a great influence on the lives of the pupils and no little effect on the creation of artistic tastes.

*Organized Games.*—Increased attention has been given during the year to healthful, wholesome play; and the advantages to be derived from organized games cannot be overestimated. Play is a necessity for the moral and physical well-being of the pupils, encouraging a desirable feeling of good fellowship, and having an important bearing on character-training. Where the teacher associates with his pupils in the playground he obtains a close insight into their dispositions, and establishes a strong claim upon their affections. More things are required in the battle of life than mere book-knowledge, and those teachers who mix freely with their pupils in the playground have opportunities for promoting not only the physical but also the mental, moral, and social development of those under their charge. So far as this phase of the school-work is concerned, we look for substantial improvement from those teachers who have had the opportunity of attending the Department's physical instruction classes. There is no more pathetic sight than to see a child wandering aimlessly about the precincts of the school, unwilling or unable to take an active part in the sports of childhood.

*Reading.*—The improvement noted in last year's report continues, and in the majority of the schools the reading is fluent and the enunciation satisfactory. There are still, however, to be found examples of a dull monotonous drawl in some of our smaller schools. The wider use of continuous readers has had a very beneficial effect. A few teachers cover the same reading-matter time after time, a method that can only induce lack of interest and mental stagnation. Serious weakness, too, is shown in the elucidation of the meaning of the passages read; and while recognizing that considerable time is often given to this, we believe that too frequently the instruction is on wrong lines, the teacher doing most of the work and leaving the pupils passively inert and mentally unresponsive. No reading-lesson can be considered satisfactory unless it secures the active co-operation of the child-mind. The interest of the reader should be so stimulated as to enable him to form his own mental picture, in greater or less detail, of the content of the matter read.

*Recitation.*—The remarks of last year apply with equal force to the work now under review. There is still a tendency in some schools towards perfunctory treatment, with the result that the recitation is mechanical, droning, and lifeless. We would again emphasize the necessity for suitable selection, the pieces memorized to be chosen not merely for their literary merit, but also for their direct influence on character-training. In some schools the pupils are permitted to submit one piece of their own choice—a practice which, under proper guidance, has much to commend it, for a child who has taken a fancy to a particular poem must have some reasons for such a choice. Where prose extracts are taken these should err on the side of brevity, and should contain thought-stimulating matter, valuable from its literary character, but still more valuable as an asset towards a higher conception of life and duty.

*English and Composition.*—It is again our pleasing duty to record faithful instruction in these subjects. Composition with few exceptions ranges from satisfactory to good. In Standards II and III, and sometimes even in Standard I, we have received highly creditable exercises, but have frequently been disappointed with the efforts of the same pupils in the upper standards, the rate of improvement not corresponding with the promise given in the earlier stages. A wider range of ideas and more fluent expression have been noted, though there are still too many instances of faulty arrangement, lack of proper sequence, introduction of irrelevant matter, and inattention to the niceties of punctuation. We would again urge upon teachers the vital importance of oral expression. It is not uncommon to find pupils who write an essay practically free from technical errors but who make the