

petency certificates, 145—the number of competitors being higher by 106 than previously. The total number of certificates gained, 85 per cent., is exactly the same as that of last year, though the percentage of proficiency certificates, 59, is 1 per cent. higher.

The Inspectors' annual return furnishes the following details of classes throughout the district :—

					Number on Roll.	Present at Annual Examination.
Standard VII	...	...	...	...	122	114
„ VI	...	...	...	...	513	506
„ V	...	...	...	...	593	581
„ IV	...	...	...	...	791	778
„ III	...	...	...	...	823	804
„ II	...	...	...	...	783	771
„ I	...	...	...	...	784	763
Preparatory	...	...	...	...	2,402	2,294
Totals for 1915					6,811	6,611
Totals for 1914					6,635	6,482

The secondary classes of the four district high schools, totalling ninety-three pupils, represent the greater part of the number given under the head of S7. Three of these classes have suffered during the year from changes of teachers, extreme difficulty being found in replacing them, and consequently some have been under temporary management for a great part of the time. Fortunately the new year finds them under happier auspices, approved control, increased attendance, and greater interest. The number of children in the preparatory class has increased, and so has the proportion it bears to the whole roll, 35·2 per cent., which, however, is not yet so large as in some other districts, the Dominion percentage for last year being 36·3. The total roll for the district has been steadily growing for the last four years, but as the districts are now constituted this will in point of numbers probably be far the smallest of the nine districts.

Our general estimate of the efficiency of the public schools is briefly expressed as follows : Good, twenty-nine schools; satisfactory to good, twenty-three schools; satisfactory, fifty-four schools; fair to satisfactory, eight schools : total, 114 schools.

	1915.	1914.	1913.
Efficient	106	96	104
Non-efficient	8	21	11

Last year showed a decided falling-off, largely attributable, as we pointed out, to the difficulty experienced by many teachers in falling into line with the requirements of the new syllabus. The general improvement in efficiency, far greater than we anticipated, shows that the trouble has been fairly met. The special troubles of this year, those of staffing, &c., consequent upon war-conditions, have been more apparent in affecting the finer quality of the work. Though many previously weak schools have recovered tone and the number marked “satisfactory” is much greater than usual, yet fewer than in previous years have received any higher commendation. We can but briefly allude to some of the subjects of instruction that appear to call for special comment.

English and Arithmetic.—The following is a summary of the number of schools regarded as efficient or non-efficient in these subjects :—

		Reading.	Writing.	Spelling.	Composition.	Arithmetic.
Efficient	...	92	102	79	86	77
Non-efficient	...	22	12	35	28	37

A comparison of this summary with that of the previous year shows a further slight falling-off in most of the branches of English, which is more than compensated by a gratifying improvement in arithmetic. Very rarely have two-thirds of the school displayed so thorough a comprehension of the subject in all classes. Weak teaching is necessarily the concomitant of an ill-manned staff, thirty-one of the thirty-seven unsatisfactory schools being controlled by sole teachers, of whom as a class most are uncertificated, many untrained, and some inexperienced. It was hoped that these defects would have been remedied before this by the higher scale of salaries now prevailing in lower-grade schools, but this advantage has been more than counteracted by the abnormal conditions of the last two years.

Geography.—In geography considerable improvement has been made, though both this subject and history have suffered from the spasmodic treatment they too often received under the former syllabus. Indeed, one might even question whether in the new race of teachers who were educated under the previous system, any taste for either study, any soundness of knowledge, or any appreciation of the value of the subjects as a training has ever been acquired. The failing to which we refer is not so much a local as a Dominion one, and may be exemplified by answers very generally supplied by recent aspirants for entrance to the teaching profession. [Examples of answers given not printed.] The candidates are largely the product of our public schools, in most cases refined and perfected at the high schools and secondary schools so freely spread over the length and breadth of the Dominion, and scores of their statements reflect no credit whatever on their training or general intelligence. A remedy should be applied, and that right early. If necessary fewer subjects, concentration on essentials, and thoroughness should be the watchwords of instructors, or soundness of knowledge, of reasoning, and of judgment may as well cease to be an educational aim.

Handwork.—Very satisfactory courses of work are carried on in the great majority of the public schools. Faults are chiefly those of omission. In the preparatory and junior divisions some few teachers still neglect to correlate with the drawing—that is, with the drawing with