

improve the conditions under which the children are working is worthy of high commendation : school-gardens, tennis-courts, basketball, cricket, and football apparatus, gramophones, and the extension of school libraries are all evidences of the keen interest taken by the parents in the educational welfare of their children.

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.

The physical instructors continue to do good work, paying visits to schools as frequently as possible, and instructing both teachers and pupils. A fillip would be given to this important branch of school-work if opportunities could be given for the instruction of teachers in "refresher" classes. It is only on rare occasions that one sees these exercises taken in school on wet days, and teachers still appear in front of their squads with books, which they consult for each exercise in the series for the day. They might well prepare brief cards and give some evidence that they have made adequate preparation for the day's work in this subject. Moreover, in different schools the exercises are taken at different times of the day, sometimes at assembly in the morning, sometimes before or after the play interval, and sometimes at assembly in the afternoon. A definite pronouncement by the physical instructors as to the most suitable time of the day for these exercises to be taken would be of advantage. In connection with this subject we desire to express our appreciation of the good work done by teachers in the encouragement of school games, and of the value placed upon the playground in the education of the pupils.

EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOLS.

A high standard of efficiency has been in general maintained in the schools of this district. The city and suburban and larger country schools are ably taught and efficiently controlled ; good work is secured. In the smaller schools, especially those of Grades I and II, some improvement is noticeable, but owing to the remoteness of these schools it is difficult to obtain suitable teachers, and frequent changes militate against continuously efficient work. The greatest need for improvement in this district is in schools of Grades I, II, and III ; and, while giving teachers every credit for their efforts in performing their onerous duties, we are of opinion that in too many cases there is a lack of insistence that their pupils should put forward their best efforts at all times. Evidence of this is seen in poorly expressed answers in oral work, in slovenly writing, in bad figuring, in incomplete statements in arithmetic, and in the general attitude of pupils towards their work. Good work cannot be produced unless the relations between teachers and pupils are cordial and there is a spirit of co-operation ; but teachers should remember that it is their business to set the standard in all things. If the teacher will make the formation of character his chief aim, he will have little difficulty in fulfilling the requirements of the syllabus.

DALTON PLAN.

In several schools a modification of the Dalton plan has been in operation, but in no case with unqualified success. Generally speaking, a good spirit of work is in evidence, and the pupils seem interested in their studies, but the results are more or less disappointing, the young students often failing to display a good knowledge of the subjects they have been studying. The plan imposes a considerable extra strain on the teacher ; and, unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, it is, with few exceptions, not our most efficient class-teachers who have adopted the plan. The method presupposes a thoroughly reliable class, plenty of accommodation which can be easily rearranged at will to suit group work, and, above all, a fully equipped library in each subject. Such conditions are for the greater part entirely lacking in our schools, especially in the city schools. Where such conditions are wanting, we are of opinion that the traditional method gives the more effective results ; and always so in the case of all but the most skilful teachers. These remarks, however, must not be interpreted as meaning that we do not realize the great need for more independent research and study on the part of the pupils. We feel that while it is, under present conditions, very difficult to run a school entirely under the Dalton plan, yet it is highly advisable and should not be difficult for the teachers and pupils to adopt a modification of the plan in one or two subjects (say, history). Finally, it should not be forgotten that independent work only is not enough ; every subject profits much through being supplemented and inspired and tested by regular bright oral work. Failure of the plan has too often been due to the almost total neglect of such work.

SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION.

Reading.—Reading is in general a good subject in our schools, especially in the larger ones. In the primer departments a falling-off is noticeable in those schools where the "look-and-say" methods have been too extensively used. The Live Readers provide a good teaching medium for the experienced teacher who is energetic and enthusiastic enough to provide sufficient extraneous aids, but in the hands of the inexperienced teacher who relies solely on the matter provided in the books they do not yield satisfactory results. This is especially noticeable in P 3 class, where pupils frequently display quite unsatisfactory ability to deal with new words. Look-and-say methods should be used extensively for the first few months of a child's school career, but word-building methods should be introduced early, and should proceed along systematic lines if ability to read new books is to be developed. In some schools the pupil's progress in reading in the primer class is inordinately slow, and teachers have seemed satisfied if, after six or nine months at school, their pupils could read two-letter or three-letter words from the blackboard. During the first year the pupils might reasonably be expected to read at least Books 1 and 2 of the Live Reader or the New Beacon Reader, and during the second year Books 3, 4, and 5 and a considerable number of short stories. In the standard classes there is little fault to be found with the oral reading, which is usually fluent and correct ; but expression is frequently lacking, and the reading lesson becomes dreary and unprofitable owing to the neglect by the teacher to keep