

SPEECH-TRAINING.

Increased attention is being paid to speech-training. In many schools regular exercises in phonics are carried out, and in most cases the effect is noticeable in the speech of the pupils. Those who wish to make a more intensive study of phonics, a knowledge of which is of great advantage to teachers, will benefit by the use of such books as "Voice Training," by Hulbert; "First Course in Phonetics," by Palmer; "Science of Speech," by Dumville; "Teaching of Reading," by Wyld; "Pronunciation of English," by Daniel Jones. A pronouncing dictionary on phonetic principles by the last authority will be of value to those who are acquainted with the international phonetic script.

SUBJECTS OF INSTRUCTION.

Reading.—The suggestions made in last year's report for the subdivision of large classes into groups for reading have not been as widely adopted as we should wish. Although we commend the increased attention paid to silent reading, we feel that greater benefit will accrue if the pupils are trained to give the results of their reading, either orally or in written form. We are pleased to note that the value of a well-stocked school library is being more widely recognized.

Writing.—Although improvement in the quality of writing has been shown in test papers, we think that a higher standard of attainment should be reached in the ordinary class exercises, not only in writing, but also in figuring and printing.

Composition.—The majority of our teachers continue to give this subject the attention which its importance merits, but too frequently lack of thoughtful instruction on the part of the teacher, and of opportunity for preparation by the pupil, is apparent in many of the written essays. In order that progress may be more readily gauged we recommend teachers to see that each pupil's work in this subject is written in a separate exercise-book.

Arithmetic.—In general, this subject continues to receive good attention. Although an improvement is noticeable in the logical setting-out of the work, yet in too many cases the figuring and arrangement in the mechanical working of the sums are not satisfactory. We frequently notice failure to link up arithmetical notions with the affairs of everyday life. This we attribute to an inclination on the part of many teachers to adhere too closely to text-book examples.

Geography.—We again desire to emphasize the necessity for more practical and experimental work in geography, nature-study, health, and elementary science. In these subjects every scheme of work should make provision for outdoor lessons, and should also contain a course of simple experiments to illustrate evaporation, condensation, combustion, and similar phenomena.

History.—History is treated with varying degrees of success. The main defect in the teaching appears to be the failure to adopt methods of presentation that capture the imagination and arouse the interest of the pupils. Instead of a slavish adherence to a text-book, teachers are recommended to make more use of dramatic methods, particularly in the early stages. Provision should be made for lessons dealing with the growth and development of our Dominion, together with stories illustrating Maori life and customs. In view of the fact that the New Zealand International Exhibition will afford an opportunity for a study of local history and Dominion development, teachers are enjoined to give this phase of the subject special attention.

Drawing.—In many schools the instruction in drawing is confined to one or two aspects only of the subject. Colour drawing especially shows a decided falling-off in quality, and in a number of schools instrumental drawing has been neglected. Too rarely are arrangements made to develop special aptitudes in particular phases of drawing on the part of individual pupils. In our report for 1923 we published some hints from Mr. Donn, Lecturer in Drawing, and we again direct the attention of teachers to his remarks.

DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS.

Detailed reports on each of the nine district high schools in operation during the year have been furnished to the Department and to the Board.

The programmes, as before, prepare pupils for the public examinations, and during the first two years the requirements of the rural or scientific course are met. In six of the nine secondary departments changes in the staff have somewhat adversely affected the work by causing breaks in its continuity, but the general standard had been of a satisfactory character, while in some of the classes work of a high quality has been done. Of the pupils presented for Matriculation, 50 per cent. obtained either a pass or a partial pass, and 61 per cent. passed the various intermediate examinations.

The organizing teacher has been successful in raising the standard of efficiency in a number of our country schools. In his annual report to the Board he states: "In all, thirty-five schools were visited, and in most cases the visit extended over a week. Ten of these schools received a second visit. The teachers appear to appreciate fully the opportunity given to receive assistance and advice in their work, and it has been a source of pleasure to me to have had their hearty co-operation in the efforts to effect a general improvement in organization and in methods of work. While I found that several teachers had difficulty in keeping the programme of work going smoothly according to the time-table, there were others who required guidance and demonstration in the detailed methods of effective teaching. As my monthly reports indicate, demonstration lessons were freely given, and, when circumstances demanded, entire control of the school was taken over by me."

PHYSICAL INSTRUCTION.

The physical instructors continue to do good work, and the majority of the teachers are to be commended for the interest taken in the exercises and in the games of the children. Many teachers spend hours of their own time in coaching the boys and girls in such games as cricket, football, tennis, basketball, swimming, &c. During the year a successful swimming carnival was held, and also an athletic championship meeting, at which two thousand children gave an excellent display of physical drill.