

EDUCATIONAL FACTS OF INTEREST IN FRANKLIN COUNTY

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The Most Important Problem.

BY F. P. CLAYTON

Commissioner Bureau of Education.
The most important problem of statesmanship in America today is the education of the children who live in the open country and in villages and small towns. The better education of these children must come through the improvement of the rural schools. For their improvement several things are necessary.

First, there must be longer terms. In North Carolina until now the average length of term of the rural schools is less than 100 days. The new law will raise the minimum to 120 days and the average to a somewhat higher figure. The minimum should be not less than 160 days. In most of the cities of the United States the school term is 180 days or more. I know of no reason why country children should not have as many days at school as city children. In nearly all countries of western Europe the country schools continue 200 days or longer. I was told today by a teacher from New South Wales in Australia that the country schools in Australia are in session forty-five weeks in the year and that there are 210 to 215 school days after all holidays have been counted out. American country children need and should have as much education as the country children of Europe and Australia.

Second, the country schools must have better teachers. It is much more important that the country teacher should be well educated, well trained, and skilled than that the city teacher have these qualifications. The city teacher works in a system in which her duties are quite definitely prescribed. She has superintendents, supervisors, and principals to help her. For the children she teaches there are churches, Sunday schools, libraries, lectures, and other organized agencies of education. The country teacher is her own superintendent, supervisor, principal, and school board, and must herself determine to a very large extent the course and character of her work. For the children she teaches there are few organized agencies of education other than the school. The country teacher is the exponent of and the leader in education in the community.

Third, the work of the country school must be better adapted to the needs of country life. Country men and women must be human beings and citizens no less than the men and women who live in the city. Therefore the things pertaining to humanity and citizenship should have a place in the country no less than in the city school. But in their occupations and environment country people and city people differ widely. In so far as education relates to occupations and environment it should be adapted to varying conditions. There is great need for courses of study in the country schools based broadly and intelligently on a careful study of what country men and women need to know. Until such a study has been made there is not much hope for a rational adaptation of school work. The National Bureau of Education is just now trying to make a comprehensive investigation of this kind.

All these things mean more money. But North Carolina is no longer poor and North Carolina people have long since learned that money expended for education is invested not only for dividends in life and citizenship and culture, but also in material wealth.

I have only to suggest further that in most North Carolina counties the schools should be consolidated. One school for each twelve or fourteen square miles is enough in a state with an open climate like that of North Carolina. When the schools have been thus consolidated, a teacher's home should be built near every school, and with school and home should go as part of their equipment from twenty to forty acres of land. The principal of the school should be required to live in the home and to cultivate the land as a model farm with garden and orchard, poultry yard, and small dairy. The use of both home and farm should be given the principal as part of his salary. Any man who ought to be permitted to serve as principal of a country school can make such a home and farm worth to him annually from two to five times as much as the salary now paid country teachers in North Carolina. Home and farm thus provided, the teacher should be required to prove his fitness and then a contract should be made with him for life or during good behavior. Good country schools can never be made by tramp teachers. Homes and lands could be provided as here suggested without cost in North Carolina. Bonds could be issued to pay for them and by the time the bonds became due the increase in the value of the land would pay for the whole.

School Attendance.

Schools.	Enrollment	Aver. att.	Amt. recvd. for improvement	No. Voluntes in Library
Pearce (Dunn)	130 72		\$202.61	132
Social Plains	23 18			
Pine Ridge	86 52	28.13		59
Pilot	98 57	131.60		156
Bunn	145 94	214.66		329
Math Rock	20 19			
Royal	53 28	15.45		
New Hope	84 37	32.40		127
Reek Springs	61 31	12.16		84
Rileys	69 43	57.50		
Prospect	34 20	37.00		100
Garner	34 18			
Oak Level	34 22			
Tharrington	41 17	5.00		96
Flat Rock	48 24	18.75		
Popps	43 30	11.08		62
Mt. Olivet	31			
Mitchiner	34 10			88
Kateville	32 25			
Winn	64 30	10.00		
Whitaker	24 14			
Laurel	27 11	20.00		81
Moulton	58 23	37.35		121
Ingleside	114 62	59.95		114
Kearneys	30 22	20.00		55
Mountain	57 27	20.75		57
Alston	41 31			
Wood	67 33	30.00		70
Centerville	55 37	20.00		85
Sandy Creek	81 51	29.00		97
Pearce (G. M.)	31 21			
Wilder	32 29	24.10		
Gay	28 19			
Justice	93 77	157.25		171
Cedar Road	105 65	18.35		109
Red Bud	32 25			
White Level	138 82	23.26		114
Seven Paths	108 56	32.00		53
Mapleville	101 46	60.72		156
Hickory Rock	93 56	65.85		75
Hayes	40 31	22.00		
Balance Rock	18 11			

Enrollment by Grades—1912-1913.	Number	Average Age
First	806	7
Second	270	9
Third	353	10
Fourth	434	12
Fifth	257	14
Sixth	202	15
Seventh	159	16
Eighth	58	16
Ninth	18	17
Tenth	10	18

Total 2567
\$1448.52 2575

One or two schools and joint schools with other counties which have not reported the enrollment by grades show an additional enrollment of 171 which makes the total enrollment of white children in the rural schools 2738.

The noticeable facts shown by the above figures is the large proportion in the first grade, 806, and the large number in the first four grades, 1893, which is about three-fourths of 2567, the number reporting by grades.

Another thing is that the average age of children in the grades from two to seven is too much. It means they have lost the finest period of life for learning and as well the years when parents can best spare them from farm work to go to school.

The great problem of rural education lies in getting in school all the time children between the years of seven and twelve.

Things Desired For Next Year.

We will have a decent length of term. We are pretty well equipped with houses. The big need left is for teachers prepared and trained to teach, together with larger and more regular attendance.

The responsibility for attaining these lies largely with the committees, the superintendent and supervisor, and with the people.

School committees should be zealous to search out the procure good teachers. From those available, the one best fitted should be chosen without regard to fear, favor, or kinship. Even if equally competent, it is often dangerous to employ a teacher closely related to any member of the committee. Some people will suspect favoritism that suspicion will beget a doubt as to ability. Criticism of work will be more ready, and the ground is laid for a fuss.

Preference should be steadfastly given to teachers who make efforts to prepare themselves. One who has taken advantage of a teacher training course at some good summer school will be worth more and deserves more.

If possible find out the record for the year before. Did she attend the institute, the teachers meetings, etc.? Did she do anything out of the school-room for the betterment of the school and its attendance?

And above all else, don't think that anybody will do to teach the little fellows.

Of course all of us know the things that are to be taught beginners, but the teacher who really knows how to teach them is the rarest and most valuable teacher of all. In a school of more than one teacher, certain executive abilities are required of the principal and these cost money. But so far as teaching is concerned, a capable primary teacher is of more importance than any other.

In the supervision of schools, the big job is to develop, encourage, and make practically useful the abilities of the teachers employed by the committees. We hope to get the work better systematized, especially in the primary grades. If the same teacher was going to have the same school all the time, it would not make so much difference. But changes every year are numerous. A new teacher who does things in different way confuses the child. Valuable time is lost getting him used to the new ways. It does not make so much difference in the advanced grades but it does upset things with the beginner.

The teachers meetings will be valuable helps in bringing these things about. The district meetings will be kept up and even more largely will be used the circular letter with plans for work as sent out by Miss Arrington last year. Schools should open as nearly at the same time as possible. Then there will be some uniformity in the work being done in the various schools at any given time. All of the six month schools will be expected to open on the same day.

More is going to be required of the teachers. Salaries are setting in the neighborhood of respectability. Even rural teachers should begin to look on their work as a profession and not a pastime. It should call forth the best, both of energy and of heart. The teacher who is afraid of doing something out of school or not laid down in the school law is not wanted in Franklin County. Regardless of how much anyone knows, unless he appreciates the responsibility of his opportunity and has a real desire to be of service to humanity, he is not worthy to teach. A child often carries away more of value from the influence of character than from all the books.

More is expected of the people. It is their children who are to be educated. Promptness and regularity of attendance will add immeasurably to the value of the school term. A little forethoughtfulness at home, maybe a little of trouble and sacrifice, can make the attendance what it ought to be.

All this is a pretty big basket of wishes for the next year but it is no more than Franklin County deserves. We ought to have them. We can get them. Then, why not?

The Best Thing of the Year.

BY R. B. WHITE

There has been an increase of over two hundred in the enrollment in the rural schools during the past year. We all know from the census that there has been no increase in the school population. Therefore the conclusion follows that the schools must be doing better work.

But this increase is almost entirely confined to one grade. The number of children in the first grade in 1912 was 594. In 1913 however that number has been increased to 806. The first grade pupils are those who have never been to school before.

So, it is reasonably certain that last year two hundred more children started to school than would have done so under former conditions.

Why? Simply because the methods of primary work have been improved, the interest of teachers increased, the importance better recognized.

The emphasis of the past two years has been placed on the work in the primary grades. Three fourths of all the pupils are in these grades. Its importance is manifest and overwhelming. Also the other grades cannot increase until these do.

We counted on improvement. We have had knowledge of better work and greater interest. But we did not expect so early and emphatic proof of the value.

It is peculiarly gratifying to me and I can afford to brag about it for I had little to do with it.

It is a fine tribute to the work and the spirit of Miss Arrington and the primary teachers. On the part of the teacher has been an eagerness to learn and to work, on hers, an earnest desire to serve and to help. We begin to see what it means to the children of the county. And I know of nothing better for them to take along into their vacation than the thought that two hundred children in Franklin County were in school last year who but for them would in all probability have not started.

The Teachers Library.

W. R. MILLS

Teaching as a profession has a literature peculiarly its own. This is just as true of this profession as of law or medicine, but the teacher, unlike the doctor or lawyer, will often try to get along with no professional library. In a large measure teachers are not to blame for seeming to neglect this important part of their equipment. The remuneration offered is in most cases too small to admit of much expenditure for professional books. In an effort to overcome this difficulty the Franklin County Teacher's Library was organized.

At the first meeting of the Teacher's Association in the fall of 1906, a cooperative plan was presented to the teachers. Each teacher was asked to contribute one dollar, and the County Board agreed to give an equal sum. This plan met with a ready response on the part of the teachers and \$25.00 was pledged in few minutes. With this and \$25.00 from the County Board, \$70.00 was in hand to make the first purchase of the kind in the county and probably in the state.

The selection of the books to be bought was no small task. The field was large, and the amount to be expended was small. In the main two ideas were kept in mind. First, to select books that would, in as far as possible, awaken and stimulate real professional spirit among the teachers. Second, to select books that offered as many practicable and usable suggestions as possible on the management of the school and on methods of teaching. Helpful lists were prepared by the professors of education in several of the colleges of the state. Suggestions were made by various teachers. Finally a list of about 70 titles was agreed upon and the books were bought. Franklin county thus took a pioneer step in the uplift of the teaching force of the state.

It is impossible to say just what this library has accomplished. But it is safe to say that it has been no small factor in the professional growth of many teachers. Of course, it has not benefited some of the teachers to any great extent. This is to be regretted, but as teaching becomes more genuinely a profession, and as the people come more and more to demand teachers with professional training, the library will find much work to do.

The Years Between Seven and Twelve.

Usually the foundation, framing, and outside of an education are acquired before the child is twelve years old. With that much he can move in and begin to live there. The interior finish and decoration can be added later on and even while he works.

Again, as a rule, nobody ever gets far in the educational line unless he has an early and good start. From figures published in this paper it appears that the average age of pupils in the 10th and highest grade is less than that of pupils in the 9th and the same as in the 7th. The 10th grade pupils had a good start and it has been easy to keep it up.

But in rural schools there is an even better reason. Most children are needed on the farm as soon as they are large enough to work. With a growing scarcity of labor, this need will become more pressing. If by twelve years of age they have not acquired the ability to pick up knowledge for themselves, the chances are heavily against them.

A long school term is more needed in the country than in the town and more in the primary grades than in the high school.

The greatest work before the school forces of Franklin county right now is to get the children in school early, keep them there regularly while small, and furnish them teachers trained to do primary work with intelligent thoroughness. That achieved, other things will take care of themselves.

A doctor looks at your tongue and feels your pulse to learn how you are getting on. The wise man watches the primary grades to know the real vigor and usefulness of a school system.

Next year, every school will run as much as six months, many a longer time. Children under twelve can be spared from work and to the school. The average child started promptly and kept regularly in school under a well trained teacher until he is twelve should have about finished the regular public school course of seven grades.

It is up to parents to realize the immediate nature of the opportunity. No time is to be lost in a child's life. Let him start as early as his age and growth justify and then see to it with religious care that he goes every day possible.

These two things stand out as the important ones:
1. Provide the best possible primary teachers.
2. Get the little fellows in school and keep them there.

The Country Schools.

BY MARY ARRINGTON

A close study of the schools of Franklin county for a period of two years and observations covering, this year alone, the work of more than 2000 school children and their teachers leaves me with two big questions in strong relief.

1. How may the rate of progress through the grades be increased?
There are 1883 children in the first, second, third and fourth grades between the average ages of 7 and 12 years. The ages of children of these grades should run from 7 to 10 years. What would it mean to 1883 country boys and girls to save two years of school life?

2. How may the learning power of the pupils be increased?
As they progress through the grades there seems to be an ever-increasing burden of difficulties. Their learning power is below par. The teachers know it and that's what sends them to summer schools.

It takes no prophet to tell us that we are to have better teaching in the country schools, for we already see the signs. The outlook is hopeful. That gives me courage to invite you to examine with me the case of the schools. If we would be helpful we must be frank.

THE SYMPTOMS.

1. Of the 618 young people in the fifth, sixth and seventh grades, too many of them cannot write a legible hand.

2. Their written work shows lack of knowledge of punctuation and simple sentence structure; the words spelled incorrectly are frequently those correctly spelled in "cutting up and down" classes.

3. In arithmetic the native intelligence and daily experiences of country children place them on a plane more or less independent of school and teacher. Yet of the pupils observed many showed the handicap of weak powers of visualization and lack of speed and accuracy in the fundamental processes of adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing.

4. With few exceptions they cannot attack intelligently an assigned lesson in history, geography, or grasp the conditions of a difficult problem in arithmetic because of their inability to read. Calling off the text glibly (and some there are who have not even this facility of pronunciation) without the thought association is a futile search after knowledge.

THE DIAGNOSIS.

What's the matter? Starvation in the primary grades, indigestion in the grammar grades.

THE REMEDY.

1. The mechanical process of learning to write is more easily acquired between the ages of six and eight than at any later period. Teach writing at the proper time.

2. Spelling is a matter for eye and hand as well as ear and mouth. See that children learn to write words correctly as well as "shine" in spelling matches, and that right early.

3. Successful written work must rest on an oral foundation. Make the transition from correctly formulated sentences in oral exercises lead naturally to the written form.

4. Drill in rapid number combinations and concrete illustration in the primary grades will reduce a tremendous waste of time and energy.

5. Teaching beginners to read has been more satisfactorily worked out than any other subject in the elementary school. The successful operation of this method would reduce the time the average child in our country schools now takes to learn the mechanics of reading by about one half. Employ teachers who can do this.

Teach the reading lessons in all the grades, so that the pupils will get the full meanings of words, sentences, paragraphs as well as a means of getting the thought of the selection.

THE TREATMENT.

But who is to apply this remedy of thoroughness?

The primary teacher for the health of the entire system depends upon the soundness of her work. What of the upper grade teacher? She cannot cure the disease of ineffectual elementary training, for that is a matter of lost time and bad habits of study. Her immediate task, however, is to arrest its progress and to make ready for better prepared classes from the primary department, for they are on the way.

Some Things That Have Happened in Franklin County.

1901-1913.

The year 1900 was the year of the suffrage amendment. It marked the beginning of a general educational interest in North Carolina. In a way it was the close of an old order. Today we stand on the threshold of

new things. With 1913-1914 something like an adequate school term begins. Hereafter will be a minimum school term of six months. In a way it is the beginning of a new order. The emphasis is going to change. The predominant call of the last twelve years has been for money with which to improve and run the schools. The insistent demand of the next years is going to be for greater efficiency of work in the houses we have built and during the term we have provided.

It is a good time to stop and take stock of how far we have gone. For that reason is given below a table of comparative figures between the years, 1900-1901 when we began to sit up and take notice, and 1912-1913 as we face the great forward step of a six months term.

	1901	1913
Number of polls listed	3716	3852
Receipts from poll tax	4099	4431
Assessed tax value of		
all property	2,781,234	6,802,536
Paid to white teachers, town and country	6,255	19,314
Town schools		8,450
Rural schools		13,864
Enrolled in white schools	2,314	4,450
Town		1,609
Rural		2,741
Average attendance	1,279	2,207
Value of houses for whites, town and country	2,930	67,400
Town		40,000
Country		27,400
Average salary of teachers per month	24.00	37.00
Average length of term in days	80	107
Number of white teachers employed	54	56

Before 1905 there was not a graded school in the county. All figures prior to that time include both the town schools and the strictly rural schools.

The Teacher's Association.

The past year has been decidedly the best school year known in Franklin County.

1. There has been the largest enrollment.
2. The average attendance was greater.
3. The average length of term has never been so great.
4. A keener and more noticeable interest has been shown by the people.
5. For the betterment of houses and grounds more than twice as much money was given by patrons than ever before.

6. And to those who saw the inside, it was realized that better planned and better done work was going on.

Back of these things lie the monthly meetings of the teachers. Sixty eight country school teachers, most of them women, and nearly every one a regular attendant.

Franklin does not pay as much as many counties and its teachers average less experience but their spirit and willingness are as fine as anybody's.

From those meetings came professional spirit and study, knowledge of better methods, and the enthusiasm which went back home to better school surroundings and out in the wayside to bring into the school those who need it.

It became a point of honor with many that every child in their districts should be in school if possible. And they were very largely. We have a compulsory law next year but one is tempted to believe almost that it is not much needed in this county.

The association is not only a clearing house for ideas but it is a power house for energy. Through it the relationship between teachers and supervisors was made close and cordial. It was the point of contact needed to make supervision efficient and leadership real.

One wonders sometimes if the people in general have any clear idea of the things which are really giving force and value to the schoolroom in Franklin County.

Looking back over the year, it should be said that whatever our relative rank in many things, in the matter of loyalty, of willingness to learn and the wish to serve on the part of its teachers, Franklin County is at the top of the first division.

A Circulating Library

BY MARY ARRINGTON.

Plans are being formulated for the establishment of a circulating library for the schools of the county. It will in no wise arrest the growth of the rural libraries such as we already have, but its function will be to supplement and render more effective those established and to stimulate those schools without libraries to get them. We may say the circulating library, at least the nucleus of it, already exist, since (Continued on 4th page.)