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# Department of Education

## Syracuse, N. Y.

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A Summary of the Report by the New York Bureau of Municipal Research to the Syracuse Associated Charities.

Horace L. Brittain, Ph. D., Investigator.

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"The public school is just as potent for civic mis-education as for civic education; an unclean school atmosphere is not only a non-conductor of clean air precept, but an active conductor of disease and enervation. No system of moral instruction in the schools can ever offset the anti-moral conduct of those schools which neglect the health of school children and school teachers, waste teacher's time, child's opportunity and taxpayer's money, or set a bad example to other public agencies by claiming immunity for mistakes and exemption from criticism.

"The educational influence of the school, like that of the individual whom it wishes to prepare for citizenship, is to be measured by what it does and gets done, rather than by what it says and hopes."

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# Significant Facts Disclosed by the School Survey

Submitted May, 1912

- 1—Of needs outlined in this survey, the superintendent of schools has noted and emphasized in his reports the need for
  - a—Adequate playgrounds.
  - b—Improved sanitary condition of school toilets.
  - c—More individual instructions for the pupils in the first grade.
- 2—The lighting of the Lincoln school, with its windows arranged in sets *without* intervening brick piers, *without* arched windows and *without* transoms, shows that the board has set for new schools a high standard of lighting.
- 3—The school grounds in six out of the seven schools visited are so inadequate that, as in the case of the "preparatory" school, there is little or no room for organized play.
- 4—Most of the schools visited were beautified by suitable pictures and pieces of statuary, though the effect in some cases is marred by the presence of dust and unsanitary surroundings.
- 5—No records are to be found in the offices of the superintendent of schools or of the principals from which can be gathered information necessary for locating, measuring and where possible, correcting.
  - a—Over-age and its causes.
  - b—Elimination and its causes.
  - c—Non-promotion and its causes.
  - d—Physical defects.
  - e—Mental defects.
- 6—Many rooms are overcrowded, some of the worst cases being in primary grades and foreign districts.
  - a—Eight senior schools have more than 44 pupils per teacher.
  - b—One senior school whose patronage is almost entirely foreign has 43 pupils per teacher.
  - c—One junior school enrolling many foreign children has 50.7 pupils per teacher.
  - d—One primary school enrolling many foreign children has 43 pupils per teacher.
  - e—If the average number of pupils per teacher is so large—so much too large—the actual figures in many rooms *within each school must be much larger still.*
- 7—A good beginning has been made in manual training, cooking and sewing and in technical, commercial and pre-vocational instruction.
- 8—The merest glance at the facts of non-attendance, non-promotion and dropping out shows that the schools should have more than
  - a—Only five unassigned teachers.
  - b—Only one open air class.
  - c—Only one preparatory school.
  - d—Only one or two ungraded rooms.

9—The lighting of room after room visited was found to have one or more of the following defects:

- a*—Shades were improperly hung.
- b*—Translucent shades were not provided where needed.
- c*—There was an inadequate amount of window space in proportion to floor area.
- d*—There were wide brick piers between the windows.
- e*—The windows did not reach nearly to the ceiling.
- f*—The windows were arched at the top.
- g*—The major light came from the rear.
- h*—All the light came from the rear.
- i*—Windows were placed so that the children must face the light.
- j*—Seats have not been changed, where easily possible, to avoid light from the rear.
- k*—Rooms are so deep that much of the blackboard space was unavailable and many children had to work in part shadow.
- l*—Pillars and porticos cut off much light.

10—The ventilation represents extremes of defects and excellencies.

- a*—It is entirely inadequate in some buildings ventilated by gravity, for example, the "preparatory" school.
- b*—It is insufficient in some buildings, ventilated by the vacuum system, at least one of which, the Putnam, has discontinued the use of the fan.
- c*—It is under suspicion in some rooms of buildings, which like the Central High are ventilated by plenum system.
- d*—Humidifying devices are lacking.
- e*—The ventilation is apparently lacking in such schools as the William McKinley school.

11—The common drinking cup is still in use on one floor of the Central High school, and above the basement in the Putnam school, although in both of these buildings sanitary drinking fountains are installed.

12—In the Putnam school a so-called sanitary drinking fountain is located within a few feet of foul smelling urinals and empties into the same sink as the waste pipe from upstairs.

13—The toilet rooms of several schools such as the Putnam and the "preparatory" are not properly ventilated.

14—In the Putnam school the play rooms and the toilet rooms are not shut off from each other.

15—Dry sweeping was observed in the buildings where the open air school is located.

16—The minimum salaries of \$400.00 for grade teachers and minimum salaries of \$550.00 for female teachers in the high school are too low. In a city of 150,000 they mean certain obstruction to efficiency.

17—Financial statements are made in such a way that it is not possible to compute from them either the total or per capita costs of administration and supervision.

18—Syracuse has the germs of several advanced movements.

- a*—Manufacturers co-operate in providing for summer work for pupils in the Technical High.
- b*—Improvement associations meet in school rooms.

Correction—10 e above should read:

- e*—The ventilation is apparently satisfactory in such schools as the William McKinley school.

- c*—Mothers' clubs are interesting themselves in certain public schools.
  - d*—The public library provides books for Regents courses to school children.
  - e*—The board of education has a committee on the wider use of school buildings.
  - f*—The chamber of commerce has a committee on school law and a permanent committee on education which has issued two large reports.
  - g*—Various private associations and manufacturing companies have been experimenting in industrial education since 1884.
  - h*—The dentists of Syracuse have done valuable volunteer work in dental inspection.
- 19—Nowhere near 100% of the social energy of the community has been applied to the solution of the school problem.

# Constructive Suggestions for Correcting the Defects Noted in the Preceding Significant Facts

- 1—That continuous record cards be provided at once for superintendents and principals to make available facts as to
  - a*—Over-age and its causes.
  - b*—Elimination and its causes.
  - c*—Non-promotion and its causes.
  - d*—Physical defects and their treatment.
  - e*—Mental defects and their treatment.
- 2—That teachers and principals be interested in securing now, in time for reporting, facts for the current school year, which are called for in the uniform questions promulgated by the United States Bureau of Education as recommended by the National Education Association.
- 3—That facts be gathered on explaining the truancy, irregular attendance, dropping out, failures of promotion, physical defects, etc., for each class in each school, in time to use such facts in planning next year's school budget and for needed changes in supervision, ventilation, school records, etc.
- 4—That financial statements be so recorded as to give the classified facts called for by the United States Bureau of Education as to cost of administration and supervision by pupil, by school, by subject.
- 5—That steps be taken now to secure for installations on the first day of the next school year the uniform records—financial and education—advised by the United States Bureau and the N. E. A.
- 6—That steps be taken to learn the success of recent efforts made by the board of education in Rochester to record currently information as to school methods, school work and school results necessary to intelligent placing and supervision.
- 7—That steps be taken now to locate overcrowding, particularly in the primary grades and foreign districts, to learn the consequences and to prove the need for avoiding such overcrowding next year, and for making good the pledge of the chamber of commerce to laborers and manufacturers that school children shall be given adequate attention.
- 8—That dry sweeping in any part of school buildings, particularly in school rooms be stopped at once.
- 9—That interest of janitors in all points of hygiene be enlisted and compelled by promulgating uniform detailed regulations and by requiring supervision by principals under the rules.
- 10—That the common drinking cup be immediately abolished wherever it has survived, and that sanitary drinking fountains be installed sufficient in number and properly located.
- 11—That toilet arrangements be made entirely sanitary, and that where necessary repairs or re-constructions be made during vacation no matter what the necessary expense.
- 12—That ventilating methods and conditions be immediately investigated while buildings are still heated to show where repairs and re-constructions may be necessary for next year.

- a*—That an anemometer be supplied for testing the air.
  - b*—That plenum fans and exhaust fans be installed.
  - c*—That humidifying devices be employed, such as evaporating pans, humidifying plants and hygrometer for currently testing the air.
  - d*—That in all projected buildings mistakes should be avoided by securing the last word on school ventilation.
- 13—That the lighting needs of each room be studied.
- a*—That in rooms lighted from one side and from the rear the seating at once be changed.
  - b*—That shades may be properly hung everywhere.
  - c*—That translucent shades be supplied in many rooms and supplemented by opaque shades attached at the bottom of the window.
  - d*—That extra windows may be added in many places.
  - e*—That transoms may be abolished.
  - f*—That in some cases brick piers can be removed.
  - g*—That in all projected buildings mistakes should be avoided by securing the last word on school lighting.
- 14—That the control of hygiene and sanitation by the board of education be made more effective.
- a*—The superintendent of schools might be given a veto on all school plans and the right to suspend temporarily any janitor for neglect of duty.
  - b*—An advisory committee of school principals might be established.
- 15—That the advisability be considered of appointing a director of school hygiene to work under the direction of the building and hygiene committee and the superintendent of schools to
- a*—Pass upon all plans for new buildings, additions and repairs.
  - b*—Supervise the work of janitors.
  - c*—Instruct teachers in the methods of teaching the elements of hygiene and sanitation.
  - d*—Take charge and utilize physical records of school children.
  - e*—Supervise play at school, athletics, etc.
- 16—That the need for higher minimum and maximum salaries of teachers be made clear to taxpayers.
- a*—By facts showing whether or not low salaries cause a high rate of withdrawals from the schools.
  - b*—Whether or not the rates paid in Syracuse are lower than those of competing school systems.
  - c*—How far, if at all, desirable teachers, whose homes are in Syracuse, consider the privilege of living at home an offset to possible increases of salary elsewhere.
- 17—That a minimum standard for space and school grounds be adopted, and a minimum standard for all new sites and that additional ground be bought either immediately surrounding or near some of the existing buildings.
- 18—That in elementary schools having adjustable furniture, it be adjusted and the non-adjustable furniture be re-arranged so as to meet individual needs.



- 19—That additional provision be made at once for the unusual, atypical, backward and anaemic children, by
- a*—More ungraded classes.
  - b*—More preparatory schools.
  - c*—More open air classes.
  - d*—Special instruction now to prevent the failure of children in June and unnecessary repetition of a term's work.
  - e*—Special efforts to enlist parents' help for children in danger of failing at the end of this term.
  - f*—Catch-up classes for backward classes and go-ahead classes for exceptionally bright pupils arranged for summer vacation schools.
- 20—That facts be gathered now to determine just where, just how much and in just what way forward steps should be taken next year in industrial and pre-vocational training.
- a*—That definite arrangements be made for instituting next autumn the proposed part-time industrial education in co-operation with local manufacturers.
  - b*—That pre-vocational courses be established in the grades.
  - c*—That continuation courses be established for working children.
  - d*—That further vocational courses be offered in the Technical High school.
  - e*—That industrial courses be offered in the summer schools and additional industrial courses in the evening schools.
- 21—That steps be taken now to command approximately 100% of the community's outside civic interest in solving Syracuse educational problems as follows:
- a*—A conference of present and possible co-operating agencies should be called now to outline plans for effective co-operation among outside agencies and between outside agencies and the board of education next year.
  - b*—Parent teacher clubs could be successfully maintained in connection with every school having more than four rooms.
  - c*—The use of school buildings for social purposes should be extended.
  - d*—A continuing central agency whether independent or part of some existing agency like the Associated Charities or Chamber of Commerce, would unquestionably be welcomed alike by school authorities and the general public.
- 22—That purposive publicity be inaugurated:
- a*—To acquaint taxpayers with school needs.
  - b*—To insure public interest in the regular work of the schools and in the needs of children, normal and sub-normal, native and foreign.
  - c*—To substitute active support for passive support of the board of education in its effort to increase the schools' efficiency.

**The school officials are not blind to the needs outlined in the foregoing pages and are trying to meet them. The following things have been done since the report was submitted in May.**

- 1—A continuous record system similar to the one recommended under article 1 of the Constructive Suggestions has been installed.
- 2—Investigation is being made of the "over-age" problem.
- 3—Overcrowding has been eliminated to a fair degree by transferring children from the overcrowded to the less congested schools.
- 4—Dry sweeping has been abolished.
- 5—Play grounds for some schools have been improved.

The following work is being planned:

- 1—The development of a definite system for school building.  
This includes among other things
  - a*—The replacement of out-of-date structures with modern buildings.
  - b*—The proper placing of new school buildings.
  - c*—The development of industrial centers.
  - d*—The constant betterment of school architecture from standpoint of light, ventilation, sanitation, etc.
- 2—The betterment of sanitary conditions of present structures as fast as funds will permit.
- 3—To establish truant classes, to supplant the present ineffective and expensive truant school.
- 4—To provide classes for backward children and increase the number of open-air schools.

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