

ESSEX COUNTY.

Charles M. Davis, Superintendent.

To E. A. Apgar, State Superintendent,

Sir:—In obedience to law, I have the honor to make this report concerning the state of public instruction in Essex county, not including the cities of Newark and Orange.

There are in this county 36 districts, containing 40 school houses, under the charge of 129 teachers, 24 male and 105 female. For the year ending August 31st, 1881, there were 28 male teachers at an average salary of \$88 a month; and 94 female teachers at \$45.60. During the past year only 24 male teachers have been employed, but their salaries have averaged \$97—an increase of 10 per cent. The number of female teachers has increased to 105, with little increase of salary, the average being \$46. The schools have been open a little over ten months; only two having fallen short of this, from circumstances which the trustees could not control.

Two new school houses have been built at an expense of about \$6,000 each. Two have been enlarged, and the rest kept in good repair, except in the four cases which are marked “poor” in my statistical report. Of these “poor” ones, the citizens of one have voted money to purchase a lot and build a new house; one has resolved to build, but cannot as yet find a satisfactory location; the others are too poor to undertake such a work.

The census shows an increase of 213 children, between the ages of live and eighteen years. The school enrollment has increased 159, and the average attendance 209. The districts have voted over \$66,000 for teachers’ salaries, for building, repairing and furnishing, and for general school and school-house purposes. This is ten per cent more than was raised for the same purpose last year.

These statements show that “the sentiment of the people regarding free public schools” is advancing, and is shown by their works.

The regular quarterly examinations have been well attended, resulting in the granting of 9 certificates of the first-grade, 8 of the second, and 49 of the third; a total of 66. Eighty-four candidates were rejected.

Of the 36 schools in the county, 11 are well graded, and 16 ungraded; the remaining 9 have each 2 teachers, with an attempt at grading, more or less successful. Three-fourths of the children are in the graded schools, under 93 teachers, most of whom have been trained for the special work of their respective departments. What was formerly known as “promotion” of teachers is not recognized here. If a teacher succeeds in her department, instead of being promoted to a so-called higher one, where she may fail, she retains her position with an increase of salary. So that as respects the character and value of the teacher’s real worth, no one department is higher than another. The 16 ungraded schools, with 18 teachers, have the well-known features of the “district school;” the disagreeable lines are, however, becoming gradually effaced under the increased attention of more enlightened trustees. There are a few very poor districts, where the small

salaries offered will not secure teachers of experience; yet in these same schools we find faithful work, and a corps of able teachers is being trained for future success in more remunerative fields. In each of the 9 "intermediate" schools there are two departments, one of which is, in most cases, altogether primary, and the teaching often approaches that in the regular primary classes of the well graded schools. But the other departments cannot be called graded, as the principal is compelled to arrange the studies of his pupils very much as is done in the ungraded "district school." It should be added that the citizens of these districts are as liberal, according to their ability, in voting taxes for the support of the schools, as are the citizens of the larger and richer districts.

Four of the well graded schools have high school departments, in three of which pupils can be fitted for college ; in the other a full preparation is given except in the study of Greek; this may be hereafter introduced, when the sentiment of the district shall require it. In two of these schools, also, special attention is given to the study of natural science and natural history. Physics and chemistry are taught in laboratories, liberally supplied with apparatus, which in one school is valued at \$1,800. Botany, mineralogy and geology are studied in the field, as well as in the class-room. It is not to be inferred that these are the only schools where these studies are successfully pursued; in many others excellent work is done in this line. But these districts have the advantage of being both rich and populous, so that enough pupils from the grammar departments can be retained to form classes in the High School.

It is gratifying to note, both among people and teachers, an advance of sentiment regarding school-room work. The people are becoming more appreciative, the teachers more ambitious. The earnestness of the latter is shown, not only by their presence at meetings of associations and institutes, and by their visiting schools that have a high reputation; but also by the fact that not a few of them were found during vacation at "summer schools," taking lessons in teaching from some of the best practical educators of the day.

During the year I have made 120 visits to schools, visiting (with one exception) every school twice, many of them three or four times. I have also attended meetings of trustees; and in several cases, meetings of the citizens, when it was thought that my presence and advice would help to increase the interest of the people in the education of their children.

It will thus be seen that the year has been one of marked progress in all respects in the schools of Essex county.