

The above table presents some interesting results. In the Board schools 5,033 pupils were examined in standards in the year 1900. As each teacher promoted his or her own pupils, there were altogether eighty examiners; and the result of their combined judgment gave 86.9 promotions for every 100 pupils examined. Last year the same number of examiners tested the standard work of 5,217 pupils, and the promotions were 87.1 for every 100 pupils examined. In the Catholic schools, with seven examiners, the promotions for 1900 and 1901 were identical. Results such as these could not possibly take place by a fast-and-loose system of examination, and it shows that, although the basis may differ which teachers accept for a standard pass, great care is bestowed upon the work of examination. A reference to the table will show how closely the pass results approximate one another in the Board and Catholic schools in the three lower standards; but in the higher work of the schools there is a wide difference in favour of the Board schools.

My views have always been in the direction of giving the utmost latitude to the practical and trained teacher to classify his pupils in the way he deems best; but, under the present standard system and the new requirements to qualify for a pass, I am afraid there is danger looming ahead. Under Regulation 4 of the standards of instruction a Standard V. pupil may pass the standard by taking the arithmetic and composition of Standard IV., a Standard IV. the arithmetic and composition of Standard III., and a Standard III. the arithmetic of Standard II. Under the old regulations geography and drawing were included among the pass-subjects, and a pupil who failed in more than one subject was deemed "to have failed" in the examination. Personally, I do not object to the inclusion of drawing and geography as class-subjects; but, taking into consideration the technical meaning of the word "pass" as applied to an examination, it seems a retrograde step to allow pupils to be certified as having passed Standard V. when yet they may not have even a moderate acquaintance with Standard V. requirements as set forth in the regulations. Fortunately, the cases are few in this district where pupils are allowed to pass under the conditions named in the regulation; but the danger remains, and will continue to operate in modifying the effective work for a pass unless a definite number of subjects and a definite standard of attainments can be arranged to qualify for promotion.

I have not yet noticed that free classification has improved the pass-work in any of the schools; on the contrary, the rush that is setting in to teach half a score of new subjects under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act is going to have a serious effect upon what must be set down as the essential work of a school. It is quite evident to any reasonable being that reading, writing—and by this is meant the power to express thought—and arithmetic cannot be set aside in the instruction and training of children; but how are the school subjects that are enumerated in the regulations under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act to be taught? If they are of more importance in the preparation of children than the present standard subjects, whether pass, class, or additional, why not substitute them? It is quite certain that all the subjects cannot be taken without terrible weakness and superficiality somewhere. For more than twenty years I have urged upon the notice of the Board the need of adaptive education, but it must be along scientific lines. Technical training is not the outcome of spasmodic effort, as certain of the teachers appear to think. System, plan, definiteness, observation, and utility must all be kept in view, and the mere giving of a few isolated lessons will not, and should not, satisfy the requirements under the Manual and Technical Instruction Act. Indeed, it would be well if teachers, before taking up any school subjects under the Act, would make themselves acquainted with the regulations that have been issued in connection with them, and then consider whether the work in their own school warrants the introduction of additional subjects. A crowded syllabus is much to be dreaded, and yet a number of teachers, without any apparent reason, and too often without the necessary training themselves, have commenced teaching certain of the subjects enumerated in the Manual and Technical Instruction Act regulations. Disappointment and failure are the sure result of such proceedings. In these remarks I do not wish in any way to make little of the earnestness and the desire of the teachers in the pursuit of knowledge. It is the duty of teachers to anticipate the future. By all means let there be a wider grasp of the work that has to be taught in the schools, but first of all let science appear in the methods of instruction in the essential subjects of that work.

The earlier forms of instruction supplied children with what in these times is properly classed as old and unimportant information; but the children in a world of competition and rapid change have to acquire the art of living, hence the teacher of to-day must be observant and alert and even anticipatory in the interests of his pupils. A breaking-away from the old methods and forms of instruction has become a necessity, and he will be the successful teacher of to-morrow who anticipates to-morrow's wants and prepares his pupils accordingly. But this is a difficult thing to expect from teachers who reside in isolated districts. Again and again my mind is impressed with the thought that teachers in outlying districts ought to be entitled to a remove after a term of years. Isolation dulls the mind and so acts upon a teacher that he in too many instances loses grip of the advancing thought that impels the town teacher into activity. But it is the system rather than the teacher that is at fault. With all the efforts that the Board have made a number of teachers remain unaffected by the advantages that are available owing to the formation of teachers' technical classes in Napier, Gisborne, and Dannevirke. Opportunities should be provided for the intellectual intercourse of teachers. It provides the most rapid and the cheapest means of influencing the minds and creating national tendencies in a country, and it would be well if all the teachers in the service of the Board could meet together in Napier at regular intervals, as was done on a former occasion, for the purpose of dealing with some of the more important aspects of school work.

The Technical School, under the direction of Mr. Anderson, is continuing to do some good work, and its influence is beginning to be felt in the schools of the district. The plan of holding an annual examination in drawing for all the children at the same time bids fair to be very successful.