1849 Bridgewater School Committee Report

The Town of Bridgewater

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REPORT

OF THE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OF THE

TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER,

FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR, 1849-50.

Boston:
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1850.
In accordance with the requisitions of the laws of this Commonwealth, the School Committee present a detailed Report of the condition of the District Schools in this town: —

The Summer School in District No. 1 was taught by Miss Harriet Dean. She gave entire satisfaction to the parents and to the Committee. The government was mild, but firm; and the scholars appeared, at the closing examination, to have made a good degree of proficiency in their studies. Miss Dean could not conveniently teach more than twelve weeks; and it being usual to have a longer school in the summer time, at the expiration of Miss Dean's term, Miss Thalia Alden was employed for seven weeks. She performed her duty faithfully and well.

The Winter School was taught by Mr. Henry C. Ryder. The School was visited soon after its commencement, and found to be very disorderly. But at subsequent visitations some improvement appeared. The discipline was strict. Some instances of undue severity have come to our knowledge. The instruction was animated. The scholars appeared to be well drilled, and made to understand their lessons.

The Summer School in District No. 2 was taught by Miss Ellen Pope. Her school was quite orderly, and in teaching she exhibits some improvement.

The Winter School was taught by Mr. Elbridge Keith, a well-known, and by many, a much-esteemed teacher. The members of the Committee who visited his school found that though fair in other respects, there was a falling off in order.
SCHOOL COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

The Summer School in District No. 3 was taught by Miss Hasadiah Chipman. The discipline was good, and the instruction good. Considerable improvement was noticed in reading and spelling by the smaller scholars. The school appeared better at the times when it was visited by the Committee, than it did at the closing examination.

The Winter School was taught by Miss Lucy Brigham, who labored to discharge her duty as teacher, with fidelity. We regret to say that she met with trouble from some ill-behaved boys. The school, when visited by the Committee, appeared to be making improvement. The reading and recitations were well conducted.

The Summer School in District No. 4 was taught by Miss Julia H. Hooper. In discipline there was need of improvement. The instruction in arithmetic and geography was intelligent and thorough. The improvement of the school was respectable, especially in the branches above mentioned.

The Winter School was taught by Mr. Elbridge Keith. The discipline was good. The improvement of the school was creditable to the fidelity of the teacher, and the diligence of the scholars.

The Summer School in District No. 5 was taught by Miss Emily Wood. The discipline and order of the school were tolerably good. The instruction and improvement in arithmetic were commendable. Study and experience are wanting to make Miss Wood an efficient and successful teacher,—especially study.

The Winter School was taught by Mr. Lucien Jackson. The discipline was very good. The instruction in grammar and geography, thorough and felicitous; and the improvement of the pupils in those branches was very fair. Though there was not a marked comparative deficiency in his mode of teaching arithmetic, yet it is thought that he would have succeeded better had he made more use of the black-board.

The Summer School in District No. 6 was taught by Miss
Sarah Leach. The Winter School was taught by Mr. Levi Leach, Jr. During both terms the discipline and order of this school was such as fully to sustain the previously-established reputation of the teachers. The methods of instruction, though admitting of improvement in some respects, were generally thorough and satisfactory. There were some instances of more than usually rapid progress in reading among the younger pupils; and some improvement in penmanship among the older pupils deserve notice.

The Summer School in District No. 7 was taught by Miss Mary Copeland. After the correction of some errors in deportment, indicative of a want of proper recognition of the official character of their teacher, the children went on in a very fair way in all respects, the teacher giving evidence of fidelity, desire to improve, and of ability, after forming a clear idea of a teacher's duty, to succeed in discharging it in a profitable manner.

The Winter School was taught by Mr. G. H. Thompson. He is an efficient disciplinarian, an interesting teacher, and a lively conductor of school exercises. His school evinced the effect of the influence which such a teacher must exert. In geography and arithmetic the pupils made very pleasing exhibitions of proficiency. In all that pertains to language, Mr. Thompson needs improvement.

The Summer School in District No. 8 was taught by Miss Elizabeth Leach. This young teacher promises well. She has in her own mind a model of a school, which she is constantly endeavoring to make perfect; and her scholars show the effect of her having such a model. She is ingenious, pains-taking, patient, affable, and efficient. Her scholars showed that she had no reason to complain of labor lost.

The Winter School was taught by Mr. John N. Brown. Mr. Brown is a faithful and efficient teacher. He has neglected no part of his duty this winter, but has taken most pains in teaching geography. The District have shown a
laudable appreciation of his labors in this department of instruction, by placing a set of maps upon the walls of his school room. The Winter School commenced in the new and commodious school house recently erected in this District, whose exterior appearance is ornamental to the pleasant village where it stands. The house was suitably dedicated before the school commenced. The occasion was marked by a large gathering of parents and children, who all appeared well affected, and who now show that their emotions were of no fleeting character, but the signs of a good purpose to pursue the way of improvement.

The Summer School in District No. 9 was taught by Miss Charlotte Christian, who labored faithfully to discharge the duties of a teacher. She took pains to overcome the habit of low and indistinct utterance in reading and recitation, which has prevailed here for some time. The discipline and instruction were good, and the improvement considerable.

The Winter School was taught by Miss Maria Crane. This school has had the reputation of being a hard one to teach, owing chiefly to the number and insubordination of the pupils. Miss Crane deserves commendation for her fidelity and her unwearied efforts as a teacher. Discipline and instruction were good, and reading and recitations satisfactory.

The Summer School in District No. 10 was taught by Miss Thalia Alden. This lady, like Misses Hill, Dean, and Elizabeth Leach, has that indispensable qualification of a good teacher, an ideal of a school in her own mind. Her discipline and instruction were good; and her scholars, with a few exceptions, docile and well-behaved.

The Winter School was kept by Mr. Thompson, already noticed as teacher of the school in District No. 7.

The Summer School in District No. 11 was taught by Miss Harriette Leach. This school is comparatively backward; but the discipline, and the improvement of the scholars under Miss Leach, was such as to give much hope for the future.
The Winter School was taught by Mr. William W. Howard. He is a good disciplinarian and a successful teacher. This school, during the winter, fully realized the hopes excited at the close of the summer term.

The Summer and Winter Schools in District No. 12 were taught by Miss Mary Covington. The discipline was excellent. Miss C. is more than usually "apt to teach;" and the school generally has made highly satisfactory improvement, especially in reading and spelling.

The Summer School in District No. 13 was taught by Miss Sarah Jane Hill, who deserves great credit for elevating the character of this school. There was energy in discipline and instruction, and the school may be reported as having made good improvement during the summer.

The Winter School was taught by Miss Thalia Alden. The school this winter was small, some scholars having removed from the District. When visited by the Committee, through the term, and at the close, there were indications of zeal in the teacher; and it was seen that the children had made a good degree of improvement.

In all our schools, with the exception of No. 12, a deficiency in reading and spelling has been noticed, arising, as it appears to us, from a desire to hurry children to the use of books unsuited to their age, both as to language and thought. The pupil does not read intelligently, and therefore reads without proper emphasis and inflection, and without improvement.

Our duty as reporters of the condition of the schools is now done; but custom sanctions the practice of giving an annual address on the subject of popular education; and we embrace the opportunity to offer a few remarks on some topics which we think interesting to us all.

Every visit to a school shows that enlarged views of education are needful for those whose duty it is to sustain our common schools. We must not look at our schools as places where the merest rudimental knowledge of a few subjects is to
be obtained, but as places where all the children of the town may obtain a good education. It is needful that we should have schools for little children and schools for older children. When a teacher must divide the time between scholars of all ages, from five to twenty, very little time can be given to each class. Much of the idleness of older scholars often proceeds from a feeling of the comparative worthlessness of the instruction given in our schools, because of the little time that can be given by the teacher to his older scholars. When these scholars are satisfied, we may almost always hear complaints that the little ones are neglected. We need a new arrangement of schools, that justice may be done to all who have a right to attend them. We trust that the subject will receive the attention that it demands, during this year, either in meetings of the citizens of the town, or in the several districts. It is time for each district to establish schools for children of different ages, or for the town to do it on a suitable scale. More ought to be done to give each class of scholars suitable instruction and training.

We would invite the attention of parents to the subject of the qualifications of teachers. We have heard it said that to teach a few small scholars, a young teacher of few attainments is quite sufficient. We would remind parents of the great value of a right start in the race for good learning and sound education. Who can teach a little so well as he that knows much? Who can direct a young mind so well as he that is in some degree acquainted with the operations of his own mind. To hear children say lessons is not all of a teacher's business. Knowledge is to be imparted. The springs of the young mind are to be touched. Who can give knowledge unless he possesses it? Who can touch those springs unless he knows where to find them? To keep children employed in conning their books is profitless business. To hear them say again and again lessons that they have read, is not useful. To give them subjects for thought, to draw out their minds, this is a
teacher's work. Who can do it unless he has been acquiring thoughtful habits himself? unless he has been drawing out his own mind. The difference between children who are talked to by an intelligent person, and skilfully drilled in such exercises as they are fit for, and children who have only drawled over their school books, is too apparent to require being exhibited in any language of ours. Let parents uphold the examining committee in rejecting applicants for schools who have not a respectable store of useful and entertaining knowledge, and at least a fair acquaintance with the branches required by law to be taught in our schools.

We ask the attention of parents to the manner in which children spend their time out of school. Useful and interesting reading at home, employment in suitable work, healthful and innocent recreations in places known to the parents,—these are proper modes of spending the time not appropriated to school. But the sights and sounds observable in the streets, the shops, and wherever men and boys resort in unoccupied hours, are proofs that other modes are allowed by parents, or at least not forbidden. The school room has no power, even when filled with the best influences, to counteract the influence exerted in misspent hours at home and abroad. We earnestly exhort parents to consider this matter. It is not police regulations that can effect what is desirable in this respect; it must be the object of parents to keep their children at home more, and to fill up their time more usefully.

Our account of the schools and our suggestions for their improvement, are respectfully submitted.

*THOMAS P. RODMAN, } School Committee
†DAVID BRIGHAM,
‡WILLIAM WARLAND, } of Bridgewater.

* Special visitor in Districts 2, 7, 8, 10.
† " " " " 4, 5, 6, 11, 12.
‡ " " " " 1, 3, 9, 13.

Bridgewater, March 11, 1850.