1852 Bridgewater School Committee Report

The Town of Bridgewater

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REPORT

OF THE

School Committee,

OF THE

TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER,

FOR THE YEAR 1852-53.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE TOWN.

1853.

J. E. FARWELL & CO., PRINTERS, 32 CONGRESS STREET, BOSTON.
REPORT.

FELLOW CITIZENS:—In accordance with custom, and the Statutes of the Commonwealth, your School Committee present their annual Report.

The following named persons were approved as teachers in the schools for which they were employed:

MALES.
Wm. A. C Converse,
Chas. E. Brigham,
E. Conant,
Nahum Bates,
Thomson B. Caldwell,
Lucian C. Tucker,
Ira L. Sturtevant,
Cyrus Benson, Jr.,

FEMALES.
Lucretia Hayward,
Cornelia Bassett,
Susan H. Christian,
Elvira Wood,
Mary Lefavour,
Dorcas A. Churchill,
Mary S. Sturtevant,
Abby A. F. Keith,
Sarah A. Barrows,
Betsey A. Tucker,
Abby W. Woods,
Mary K. Alden,
Caroline A. Ashley.

Their literary qualifications, if not as good as desired, were, with one or two exceptions, equal to well-founded expectations; and in the exceptions, alluded to, they were not so far below the average, as to justify us in requiring another selection. In conducting the schools, they seemed to be actuated by an honest endeavor to merit the commendation of all interested. It was
not enough to keep a tolerably good school, and receive their money—they desired to excel. For this we would commend them, although some of their efforts were not crowned with complete success.

We commend also the quiet and cheerful manner in which a large proportion of the scholars complied with the wishes of the teachers in regard to industry and deportment. They cannot fail to receive the consequent reward of their co-operation, which is the meet recompense of a liberal expenditure. There were some, however, as was expected, who were disposed to be inactive, or mischievous.

Many parents have encouraged the efforts of teachers and pupils by visiting their respective schools during term-time or at the close. Believing these visits not only interesting to the pupils, but beneficial, we express a hope that so desirable a custom will become prevalent.

Some of the books, of which there was a great variety, did not seem to be made sufficiently useful. Therefore, after voting not to exclude those which parents had purchased on previous recommendation, we agreed to prescribe the following list. The new books introduced are smaller, and of less price.

Worcester's First, Second, and Third Reading Books; Leavitt's 1st, 2d & 3d; Russell's Sequel to the Primary Reader; Tower's Second Class Book in Reading; Fowle's Common School Speller; Smith's Primary and Quarto Geography; Colburn and Walton's First Steps in Numbers; Colburn's First Lessons in Arithmetic; Greenleaf's Common School Arithmetic; Scheib's Grammar; Cutter's First Book in Physiology; Webster's or Worcester's Dictionary; Goodrich's History of the United States.

In dealing with the details of individual schools, we are aware that there may be a difference of opinion. But this does not cancel our obligation to comply with the conceded requirements of law.

No. 1. The summer term commenced with two departments,
but the number of pupils was so great as to make it necessary to establish a third. In the winter, the latter was discontinued.

The Primary School, consisting of thirty-four children, about five years old, was under the care of an inexperienced teacher. The discipline would naturally be difficult, unless the teacher resorted to means which would check the youthful affections to an injurious extent. The Committee found that freedom of juvenile thought, motion and affection which they desired, but would have been better pleased with more firmness in enforcing obedience to the few rules which are necessary in such a school.

Of the intermediate school, but little need be said. In summer, it was *eminently good*. In winter, it was larger. From this and other causes beyond the control of its directors, its state was scarcely as good as during the summer.

The Grammar Department, in summer, under the charge of a female, exhibited a decided improvement in the deportment of the pupils, as well as in the promptness and accuracy with which they expressed the knowledge they had acquired. The closing exercises were very creditable to the skill and devotedness of the teacher.

The deportment of the pupils at the close of the winter term, was quite equal, if not superior, to that during the summer term; but in other respects the exchange of a female for a male did not enhance the value of the school. We would not, however, disparage the faithful efforts of the teacher of the winter term.

No. 2. As this school progressed it became more and more apparent that the mental habits of the scholars were yielding to the well directed efforts of the teacher. The recitations and deportment continued for some time to improve, and, at the close of the winter term, the school exhibited a very marked degree of improvement. The same teacher continued through the year.

No. 3. Both teachers and pupils have suffered much inconvenience from the want of a suitable school-room. Both terms of the school, however, exhibited a very creditable degree of pro-
gress, and in the new and commodious edifice, which the district is about to erect, the pupils will be enabled to advance still more rapidly.

No. 4. The summer school was taught by the same teacher who was employed, the previous year. It was a good school, distinguished for promptness, good order, and a commendable degree of progress.

The winter term was also under the care of an experienced teacher, and at the commencement promised no less degree of success than the summer term. Towards the close, however, less energy was manifest, which was ascribed to the imperfect health of the teacher.

No. 5. The summer term was the first effort of the teacher, yet the school was distinguished for the quiet and orderly habits of the pupils. They seemed to understand what they had been doing, and their progress deserves a notice, commendatory of both teacher and pupils.

The winter school was under the care of the visiting member of the committee.

No. 6. The summer term was kept by a young lady of limited experience, who succeeded in many respects very well. She found it difficult to secure a desirable degree of good order. The general advancement of the school, nevertheless, deserves to be mentioned favorably.

The winter term was taught by another lady, who also found it difficult, at times, to preserve a proper degree of decorum on the part of some of the scholars. Her efforts, however, were satisfactory, and the general progress was truly commendable. The reading lessons were eminently good.

No. 7. The summer school was in a state highly satisfactory to the committee, both in respect to discipline and instruction. In the recent death of Miss Ashley, the fraternity of teachers has lost one of its most useful and devoted members.

The deportment and recitations, during the winter term, were
such as to reflect much credit on the school and its teacher. The first effort of a teacher is rarely more successful.

No. 8. The summer term was thoroughly taught, and well disciplined. The scholars were faithful in the discharge of their duties and made much improvement, especially in arithmetic.

In winter, the school also exhibited a marked degree of improvement, more particularly in reading. The district is fortunate in securing the continued services of so good a teacher.

No. 9. In summer, the teacher labored hard to bring the school into a good condition, but her success was hardly commensurate with her efforts.

The winter school, under the care of a male teacher of superior endowments, presented an improved appearance. Some of the pupils recited in a manner which entitled them to much credit, but the school as a whole has not made an average amount of progress, while the teachers have labored as assiduously as any in town. Those who visit the school, soon perceive its necessities.

No. 10. In the summer the school was well taught and well governed. The natural consequence was a commendable degree of progress.

In winter, under the labors of a faithful teacher, the school manifested that degree of interest which always ensures success.

No. 11. This school, in summer, was the first effort of the teacher. But proceeding on the truth of the maxim, that whatever is worth doing is worth doing well, she was successful in interesting her pupils, which ensured a good degree of progress.

In the early part of the winter term, there seemed to be a lack of interest, and energy. The latter part was better, and considerable advancement was manifest. In this, and several other schools, the reading books are too far advanced for the children. We know that scholars are ambitious to read in large books, but the expense is often worse than lost. Their progress is retarded to an unexpected extent.

No. 12. The summer school, as the first attempt of the teacher,
was worthy of a favorable notice. The Committee, however, would have been better pleased with more energy in the various exercises, the efforts of the teacher being well directed.

The winter term, under the care of a lady of some experience in the business, exhibited an improved appearance. The lessons seemed to be well digested, and amid a general advancement there were several unusual specimens of progress.

No. 13. This school both in summer, and winter, was taught by the same experienced teacher. An unusual interest was soon aroused, which has continued to increase. A greater interest in reading lessons is seldom found. The instruction in morals and science was faithful and efficient. Where a school for any cause is backward, too much pains cannot be taken to procure and continue a teacher of well-known success.

But where scholars are disposed to be studious and orderly in deportment, the sprightliness and lively interest of a young teacher is often found equal, if not superior, to the more sedate manners of age. From this and other causes a teacher is often successful in one school, who would be likely to fail in another, and vice versa.

Such being the present state of the public schools, we would respectfully offer, for the consideration of their patrons, some suggestions concerning the future.

As the number of scholars is annually increasing, it is presumed that at appropriate intervals, there ought to be a corresponding increase of school-money.

In several of the districts, the scholars have a valid claim for less-inconvenient school rooms and appendages, that in educational advancement they may travel on that plane of equality, which the law evidently contemplates.

But it is not sufficient to furnish rising generations with good school teachers, and well furnished school rooms. These facilities fall far short of accomplishing their full amount of good, unless something more is done. There must be a desire, an inter-
est, an ambition, on the part of those being educated, to co-operate with the educators. To secure this, the aid of parents is indispensable. Children very early imbibe the impression, that in matters of doubt, or importance, "Father and Mother know what is right, and what is best."

Parents, therefore, possess the power of so directing the ambition of their children, that they will co-operate with the teacher, or counteract his efforts to promote their welfare. Both public and private schools are deeply affected by this power. Scholars are fond of listening to stories about the schools of former times. Many of the incidents are by some related in a manner which leaves an impression on the mind that it is witty and shrewd to make mischief in school, and, if detected, that it is patriotic to resist the teacher. This mischievous impression is too frequently the secret source of merited rebuke and punishment. It is also very injurious to allow scholars to hear, or overhear, remarks indicating a want of confidence in their teacher, or condemnatory of some of his rules. They are apt to imagine that if a teacher is imperfect, or a rule injudicious, they have a right to be disrespectful and disobedient. No scholar should be allowed to leave home with an avowed determination to disregard any of the requirements of his teacher. Rules enough will be broken without premeditation. In forming an opinion of the rules and requirements of a teacher, it should be borne in mind that he has better opportunities of knowing what is done in school and what is not, what is necessary and what is not, than they who merely listen to the reports of pupils. The latter may be honest, and yet do injustice, because they do not view single facts in connection with the circumstances attending them. It may be here remarked that culprits are not famous for criminating themselves, or their friends. It should be remembered also, that a teacher's reputation like that of others, is "better than great riches."

In addition to the preceding suggestions, as means of sustaining and improving the present condition of the schools, we would
recommend the continuance of teachers from year to year in the same school, unless it be probable that others can be obtained who are more than a little better. A slight degree of superiority is not sufficient to counterbalance the advantage of a mutual acquaintance between teachers and pupils. Irregular attendance is an evil, which to some extent must always exist. Ill health and inclement weather demand it. Whatever tends to diminish this evil, not only benefits the irregular attendants, but also the other pupils. In permitting scholars to be absent, parents ought, therefore, to consider the interests of their neighbors, as well as their own. More especially should they do this in graded schools, because in these the irregularity may become so great as to destroy the benefit of gradation.

In conclusion, having the improvement of the schools steadily in view, we recommend a free interchange of thought in reference to the best means of bringing our school system to that degree of perfection, in which no additional expenditure would be necessary to prevent our permanent population from invading the “inalienable rights” of a free and enlightened community.

PHILANDER LEACH, School
CYRUS BENSON, Jr., Committee.

BRIDGEWATER, March 7, 1853.
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<th>No. of School Districts</th>
<th>No. of Children between 5 and 15 years</th>
<th>No. attending School</th>
<th>Average Attendance</th>
<th>Length of School in Months</th>
<th>Wages of Teachers per month, including board.</th>
<th>Arrears of school money, 1853-54, to be paid to District on half on scholar</th>
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Town Grant $2000 00  
State Fund 118 37  
Edson Fund 36 00  

* Figures in the left-hand column refer to the Summer School.