1866

1865-1866 Report of the Committee upon the Reorganization of the Public Schools in the Town of Bridgewater

The Town of Bridgewater

Follow this and additional works at: https://vc.bridgew.edu/town_reports

**Recommended Citation**


This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.
REPORT
OF
THE COMMITTEE
UPON THE
Reorganization of the Public Schools
IN THE
TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER.

FEBRUARY, 1866.

BOSTON:
WRIGHT & POTTER, PRINTERS, No. 4 SPRING LANE.
1866.
REPORT
OF
THE COMMITTEE
UPON THE
Reorganization of the Public Schools
IN THE
TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER.

FEBRUARY, 1866.

BOSTON:
WRIGHT & POTTER, PRINTERS, NO. 4 SPRING LANE.
1866.
The Committee, who were instructed by vote of the town, passed March 6th, 1865, "to take into consideration the School-District System, and report such alterations and improvements as they think for the interests of the town," have carefully attended to their duty, and respectfully submit to the candid consideration of the inhabitants of the town, the following considerations respecting the

SCHOOL-DISTRICT SYSTEM.

We assume that the great object of the people of this town is the establishment of good schools, at the least cost, and that they have no interest in retaining the District System when it fails to secure these ends.

Every parent desires the aid of a good school in the education of his children. The family relies upon the school for a very important part of the education of childhood. Whatever, therefore, elevates the character of a school, tends directly to promote the happiness and well-being of the family circle, and should receive the friendly aid and encouragement of every parent; but so far as the school promotes the welfare of the family, it secures the well-being of society, which is but the aggregate of the families which compose the community. The safety and prosperity of every community depends upon the intelligence and good character of its individual members. Not the parent only, but every citizen, therefore, has a personal interest in securing the advantages of a good school education to every child in the town.

It then becomes a question of vital importance to the inhabitants of the town, to ascertain what is the best school system within their reach, and to secure its adoption. In the solution of this question, two school systems claim our atten-
tion. First, the District system, which now exists in the town, in which the school district builds and maintains the schoolhouse; and, if the town annually grants permission, chooses a Prudential Committee, who takes care of the school property, hires the teacher, and provides fuel for the school. Second, the Municipal or Town system. Where this exists, the towns erect and support the school-houses, and the school committee select the teachers.

It may aid in forming a just estimate of the District system, to take the testimony of other towns, and of individuals, who have had experience with both systems. One hundred or more cities and towns in the State have voluntarily abandoned the District system, and have adopted the Municipal system. "These cities and towns together probably contain more than one-half of the population of the State, and in the character of their schools are far in advance of the rest of the Commonwealth." They gave up the District system, not because they had a larger population, or more wealth, but because they found that the Town system would give them better schools,—would secure schools of equal length for all the children of the town, and a more economical expenditure of the money raised for their support.

Hon. George S. Boutwell, while Secretary of the State Board of Education, gave the following testimony:

"I entered upon the duties of the office I now hold, with some faith in the District system; my observation and experience have destroyed that faith entirely. It is a system admirably adapted to secure poor schools, incompetent teachers, consequent waste of public money; and yet neither committees, nor districts, nor towns be responsible therefor.

It is unquestionably true, that the best schools are found where the District system does not exist; and the charge, in a few instances made or suggested, that there has been no improvement for twenty-five years, is limited in its origin and in its truthful application to those towns which are divided into districts. Whenever a town has established the Municipal system, and adhered to it for two years, there has never, within my knowledge, been a serious effort in favor of the restoration of the district. These facts are so encouraging and conclusive, that they ought, without argument, to convince the most skeptical."
Hon. Joseph White, the present Secretary of the Board of Education, says, "It is because I honestly and most firmly believe that the subdivision of the towns into numerous, and, in the majority of cases, small school districts, presents the most formidable obstacle to any considerable improvement in their schools, that I invite the attention of the people to the question of abolishing them." Such is the testimony of men of sound judgment, and having the best opportunities for gaining a full knowledge of the practical working of the District system.

We now invite attention to some of the obstacles in the way of good schools under the District system.

1. The system prevents a good organization of the schools. The town ought to have so many, and only so many schools of different grades, as the character and number of the children of a school age demand. It is of the first importance that the schools should, as far as possible, be properly graded. "This is simply arranging children of the same age and similar attainments in separate schools, or in separate departments of the same school, under a teacher carefully selected, so that the instruction and discipline suited to one shall be equally adapted to the whole; to the end that all waste of time on the part of the teacher, and distraction of attention on the part of the pupils, may be avoided." No one can doubt the great advantage of such a division of labor. The bringing together of pupils of all ages in the same school ought to be avoided whenever it is possible.

Another object of primary importance is, to secure the right number of scholars for a good school. Experience has clearly shown, that a school for a single teacher should not exceed from forty to fifty pupils, neither should it be much smaller. In saying the schools should be made of this size, of course we do not mean to say that this can be done in every case, but this should be the aim. In this town there are in the first district 190 scholars; in the third, 162; in the ninth, 140; in each of four others not less than 36; and there are five others, in each of which the number is less than twenty-five. One school has but 10 scholars. The large number of scholars in some districts gives just what is desired,—the opportunity to grade the
schools; but even there the impassable district line stands in
the way of the best distribution of the scholars in two adjoin-
ing districts; as, for instance, in the Third and Ninth Districts.
But such small schools as we have are in every way undesir-
able; they are so small that two of them separate are of but
half as much value as if they were united.

In the annual reports of the Board of Education we find
the testimony of school committees in different parts of the
State, who have compared these small schools with the larger
ones in their towns, and they all agree in saying that the aver-
age scholarship of the pupils in such small schools is not as
good as in the larger schools; not because the pupils have not
as much natural ability, but because with so few scholars it
is next to impossible to inspire any enthusiasm for study.
Neither teacher nor pupils have their energies called out as in
the larger school.

Again, such small schools waste money and diminish the
amount of schooling which might be had. The expense for
two is twice as much as for one. Most teachers would prefer
the two united, at the same wages that would be paid for one.
We give one illustration of this statement: Two adjoining
districts in the town, which might be united, that together have
38 scholars, in 1864, expended $342 for the wages and board
of two teachers; they had thirty weeks of school; the aver-
age compensation of the teachers was $5.70 per week. Had
the two schools been united under one teacher, by expending
$320 they might have had forty weeks of school, and might
have paid the teachers $8 per week instead of $5.70. Thus,
besides saving some money and the expenses of one house,
they would have had a better school in numbers, a more com-
petent teacher, and would have added one-third to the length
of the school. Take another view of the expenditure of money:
In the same year a pupil in the First District drew $3.77 of the
school money, while one in the Twelfth drew $12.28; and yet, as
we have shown, the advantages of the pupils in these smaller
schools are inferior to those enjoyed in most of the larger
schools.

Some change is *imperatively* demanded, if we would give all
our children anything like equal advantages of education. We are aware that schools in the sparsely populated portions of the town must cost more per scholar; also, that an entirely equal and impartial distribution of the scholars among the several schools is not practicable at present; but there is no necessity for such great inequality as now exists. We can come very much nearer to an equal distribution of school privileges; we ought to begin the work at once, and do something every year till it is accomplished. The school districts were formed when the circumstances of the people were very different from what they are at the present time. The districts cannot secure a more perfect organization of the schools—neither can the school committee. It can only be done by the authority of the town; and the only way for the town to do it, is to erase the district lines, and then locate the school-houses so as to meet the present wants of the people.

2. The system perpetuates poor school-houses. — A good school-house is as powerful an influence in the school education of the child, as a good dwelling-house is in his home education. The school-house ought to be comfortable, convenient, and attractive. To be comfortable, it should have a healthful location, be large enough for the school, be well ventilated, and properly warmed and lighted. To be convenient and attractive, it must be well constructed, supplied with good furniture, and all the appliances for school work, and be tastefully furnished. We advocate no extravagance in these things; but we say, make the school-house and premises comfortable and attractive, and keep them so, and thus nip in the bud the habit of whittling, pencilling, and tearing to pieces, now so prevalent in many schools. The school may, and it should, educate the child into better habits, and cultivate the faculty by which we appreciate what is beautiful in nature and art. And as we value the health, comfort, and success of our children, we shall provide them with good school-houses.

Several of the structures used for school-houses in this town are in a deplorably dilapidated condition—utterly unfit for any school. The people of these districts are not satisfied with them, and the citizens generally are ashamed of them.
But so long as the house is the property of the district, the town can do nothing to improve it; and in the district the tax for a better house is so great, that the opposition of a few, and the indifference of some others, is enough to delay any action for improvement so long as the house can possibly be used.

If the town owned the school-houses, such buildings would very soon be removed; for while the tax for building a school-house is a burden to a weak district, it would hardly be felt at all when distributed over the whole town.

3. *It does not secure as high a grade of teachers as the town system.* The quality of the school depends upon the character of the teacher; the selection of a competent teacher is therefore a matter of vital importance. Under this system, there can be no security for the selection of competent teachers. How is the man chosen to whom this important trust is confided? In this town, in the most careless manner possible. The town, at its annual meeting, votes to choose prudential committees, who shall select and contract with the teachers. The moderator calls for a nomination for prudential committee. The man who can speak loudest makes the nomination. The nominee is proposed, a few hands are raised, and he is declared elected.

Suppose he is the best man who could be chosen,—what is his position? Rotation in office, annually, is the rule; he therefore expects to hold office but one year. He lacks the one all-essential requisite of experience in the business he is to transact. "His acquaintance with teachers is also limited; and he finds, moreover, that the towns in which the prudential system does not exist, having always a committee competent to make contracts for a year in advance, have secured the services of the most competent persons." He finally makes a selection. But the school committee must examine and approve the candidate. Very often he is not presented for examination till a day or two before the time for opening the school. If he is found qualified, all goes well; but if he is incompetent, the school committee are placed in a most delicate and difficult position. It is a serious matter to the candidate to be rejected; the rejection will delay the opening of the school; and will very
likely offend the prudential committee, and a part, at least, of the parents of the district. If the first candidate be rejected, the next may be no better; hence it is very natural, and perhaps not unwise, for the committee to grant a certificate of approval, against their own judgment; and thus incompetent teachers are installed in the schools. The result is a partial, or total failure of the school. Parents are dissatisfied, money is wasted; but nobody is responsible, for the prudential committee could only select the teacher, and the school committee did not feel at liberty to reject him.

"It is very hard for the school committee to be held responsible for the character of our schools, when they have nothing to do with selecting the teachers. We act on no such absurd system in any other of the town affairs. For instance: the town authorizes the selectmen to superintend the repairs of bridges, and it makes them the judges of the kind of repairs needed, expects them to engage the builder, to make the contract, and agree upon the price, and all terms and conditions, and then holds them responsible. Suppose that the town, instead of doing this, should choose a man to engage a bridge-builder, to make the contract, and agree upon price, terms, and conditions; and should then send the builder thus engaged to the selectmen for them to examine him, and see if he is qualified! Everybody sees how absurd this would be; and yet we do just this, and worse, in the management of our schools."

This conflict in the social and official relations of prudential and school committees is not the fault of the men acting on these committees; the evil is inherent in the system itself. It is a double-headed system,—"that's what's the matter." The party who contracts with the teacher must be able, before the contract is made, to discriminate between candidates who are qualified and those who are not. The remedy, therefore, is to intrust the selection of the teachers to the school committee. It is certainly to be expected that the school committee chosen for three years—one-third of them annually—two-thirds of whom will have had experience, will be qualified to choose a competent teacher. It is their business to examine the schools; they know what the school needs; they will have a more extended
acquaintance with teachers; and knowing, too, that if the person selected by them fails in the school, — the responsibility will be fixed upon them, — they will be all the more careful in their selection. Evidently, a committee of three or more persons will be more impartial in their choice than a committee of one, and all the friction incident to the rejection of candidates under the prudential committee system will be avoided.

4.— This system gives a more frequent change of teachers than any other. In most districts a new prudential committee is chosen annually; each one has his own preferences; the school may have an excellent teacher, but he prefers another, and a change is made. The same teacher does not often remain in the district more than one year. Some districts employ a female teacher in summer, and a male teacher in winter; thus securing a change of teacher every term. One district in this town has had ten different teachers for the last ten consecutive terms of school. Next to an incompetent teacher, nothing is more disastrous in its effect upon a school, than a frequent change of its head. Change the teacher every term, and there can be no uniform methods of instruction, no well-arranged plan extending through successive terms. Each teacher will have his own plans and processes, and the pupils will be situated very much like the frog in the well, in the old problem, who jumped up three feet every day, and fell back two every night; a large part of what they do in one term is repeated in the next, before the new teacher gets fairly acquainted with them. The change sacrifices to a great extent the benefits of experience. “A teacher must learn the characters of his pupils intellectual and moral. He must make each child a study. Until he knows the peculiarities, the attainments, and the wants of his pupils, he cannot successfully teach them.” It takes time to gain this acquaintance with the pupils. “Every successful teacher knows that a second term in the same school is worth at least one-third more than the first. The change then entails a dead loss of more than thirty per cent. of the expenditures made for the schools.” A person who takes a school for a single term only, has neither the opportunity nor the motive to lay his plans for systematic and thorough teaching; on the con-
trary, he is under the strongest temptation to train his school so as to make the best show he can at the end of the term, without regard to its effect upon the character of his pupils. The permanent teacher, on the other hand, plans for the future; he seeks to know his pupils and to adapt his modes of instruction to the character and standing of each pupil. When he reopens his school the second term, "he is welcomed by the pupils, whose respect and love he has won. He knows every class and every scholar. On the first day the school is in working order." And the teacher and pupils go forward without delay.

What would be the effect of making a semi-annual change of agents and overseers in the manufactories of the town, or of the doctors, or of the pastors in our parishes? Men do not make such blunders in business matters. Are such frequent changes any less disastrous to the best interests of our schools? The object of our school system is to get a competent teacher into every school; but the district and the prudential committee system is the surest guaranty the town can take, that the object shall never be attained.

5. *This system does not afford equal school privileges to all the children of the town.*—"The schools are supported from a common fund, raised by equal taxation on all the property of the town; and the *theory* is, that all the children are entitled to equal privileges; but the *fact* is, that great inequality prevails. The districts differ in numbers, in wealth, in intelligence, and in public spirit; and hence there is a great diversity in the school-houses, in school furniture and apparatus, in the qualification of teachers, in the length of the schools and in the spirit which pervades them.

**ADVANTAGES OF THE TOWN SYSTEM.**

We have endeavored, impartially, to set forth the most radical defects of the District system; defects which cannot, perhaps, be all removed at once, by any system that it is in our power to adopt. But let the town own the school property, and take the entire charge of the schools, and very great
improvement upon their present condition might speedily be secured.

1. Erase these arbitrary district lines, and the scholars in the compact portions of the town might all be distributed into well-graded schools of the proper size; and nearly all the others could be brought together in schools of the right number to be most profitably taught by one teacher. And this could be done without requiring any scholar to walk a greater distance than many now travel.

2. The amount of money spent in the school would not be measured by the number of scholars, or the number of districts; but there would be schools of equal length for all the children of the town.

3. Good school-houses, well furnished, would be provided for all parts of the town, and they would be kept in good order. For under this system, "everything relating to the schools and the school property is in the hands of one committee, the members of which expect to be answerable for the manner in which they fulfil their trust. The teachers understand that they are held responsible for the condition of the buildings while they are in their charge, and the children are made aware that the law against wilful injury will be enforced, if occasion requires. This understanding is all that is necessary to protect this property."

4. By entrusting the selection of teachers to the school committee, as has already been shown, a better class of teachers would be secured; and, what is still better, they could be employed year after year in the same schools; and, if necessary to remove a teacher, it could be done with much less friction than under the District system.

5. There would be a better supervision of the schools. The school committee having the entire charge of them, with all the responsibility attending the possession of such power, would have a deeper interest in their work, and much stronger inducements to labor for the improvement of the schools. As it is now, their hands are fettered. They cannot do much to improve the schools; hence the difficulty often experienced in finding competent men who are willing to serve in this office.
6. The money raised for the support of schools would be much more economically expended. Each one of the advantages already specified is an argument in support of this proposition; additional arguments are not necessary.

These advantages are not the mere assertions of your committee; they have been verified in the experience of every town which has tried the Municipal system. The opinions of the best judges all unite in this testimony. The adoption of the Town system is at once followed by a more general, and a deeper interest in all matters pertaining to the schools; all parts have an equal claim upon the town, and will see to it that advantages allowed to one part are made up to the rest.

As the result of a careful investigation of the whole subject referred to them, your committee are unanimous in the conclusion, that the best interests of our schools demand the immediate

**ABOLITION OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.**

We therefore recommend that the school districts of the town be dissolved, in the manner provided by the General Statutes of the State, chap. 39, sect. 3, which we quote:—

"A town may at any time abolish the school districts therein, and shall thereupon forthwith take possession of all the school-houses, land, apparatus, and other property owned and used for school purposes, which such districts might lawfully sell and convey. The property so taken shall be appraised under the direction of the town; and, at the next annual assessment thereafter, a tax shall be levied upon the whole town, and equal to the amount of said appraisal; and there shall be remitted to the tax payers of each district, the said appraised value of the property thus taken. Or the difference in the value of the property of the several districts may be adjusted in any other manner agreed upon by the parties in interest."

We further recommend that a committee be appointed to appraise the present school property of the several districts, and that the value of this property be credited to the tax payers of the districts, as provided for in the Statute.

Also, that a committee be appointed "to sell the old school-houses which are not wanted; to purchase land for any new
school-houses that may be needed; to build said houses, and to
furnish them; and to enlarge or repair, and refurnish such houses
as may need such changes to make them commodious."

The committee present the following plan for the location
and improvements of school-houses.

1. That the school-house in what is now called the First
District remain in its present location, and be enlarged so as
to furnish adequate accommodations for each department of
the school. The room for the Primary department of this
school is not only inconvenient, and without proper desks and
seats, but is so small that scholars have to remain at home
because there is not room to receive them.

2. That the school-house in what is now called the Second
District remain where it now stands. It is in good repair and
needs no alteration.

3. That the school-house in what is now the Third Dis-
trict remain in its present location, and be enlarged by the
addition of another story to the building, so as to accommodate
a primary and a grammar school.

4. That in what is now called the Fourth District a new
school-house be built on or near the site of the present build-
ing. It is an abuse of our mother-tongue to call the present
structure a school-house.

5. That a new school-house be built in a location between
the houses of S. W. Mitchell and Samuel Leonard, and another
new school-house be located near the house of Lewis Went-
worth, for the accommodation of the inhabitants in what are
now known as the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Districts. The
number of scholars in these three districts is eighty-five, no
more than enough for two schools. The locations here recom-
ended would not require any scholar to walk farther than
many now travel. And the school-houses in the Fifth and
Sixth Districts are very poor, unfit for the use of any school.

6. That the school-house in what is now the Eighth District
remain where it now is, and be refurnished with new desks
and seats; the present furniture is uncomfortable and the cause
of much disorder.

7. That the school-house in what is now the Ninth District
remain in its present location, subject to any enlargement or repairs that may be needed.

8. That a new school-house, large enough to accommodate fifty scholars, be built near the Iron Works on the east side of the Railroad. The number of scholars in the Third District is 140, while the number of seats in the school-room is only 88. The number of scholars in the Ninth District is 162, with only two school-rooms. It must be apparent to everybody that more ample accommodations are required for this section of the town. In the judgment of the committee and others, the wants of this section will be best met by arranging each of the school-houses in what are now known as the Third and Ninth Districts, so as to accommodate a primary school under one teacher, and a grammar school under a principal, with an assistant if need be; and then to establish a primary school in the new house now recommended.

9. That the school-house in the Tenth District be moved and enlarged, or a new house be built, in a location that shall accommodate what are now called the Tenth and Eleventh Districts. The Eleventh District has a poor school-house, and the two districts have only thirty-nine scholars, with an average attendance much less. It may be difficult to locate this school-house, but we believe the union of these two schools can be effected, and that it will prove to be the wisest and most economical plan that could be adopted.

10. That the school-house in what is now called the Twelfth District remain where it now stands, and be repaired. This district has but a fraction of a school — only ten scholars — and yet it is so located that it cannot be united with any other in this town. It would be much better to unite this school, if it can be done, with the school in the adjoining district in Middleborough, than to continue it as a separate school.

11. That the school-house in what is now called the Thirteenth District remain in its present location, subject to any repairs that may be needed.

The adoption of this plan will require the town to erect and maintain the school-houses, and will transfer the care of the houses and the selection of teachers from the prudential com-
mittee to the school committee. This is what should be. The plan is in accordance with that generally adopted and strongly approved in managing other departments of business. It has been shown that the town will give us better school-houses than the districts do; that the school committee can secure better teachers than are obtained under the double-headed system; that good teachers can be longer retained, and that poor teachers can be more easily dismissed. It also simplifies the superintendence of the schools, and increases the responsibility of those who superintend, in a way that results favorably to the school.

It may be said that we have presented only one side of the question. We propose now to speak briefly of some of the objections urged against the Town system. The building of school-houses by the town is opposed by some on the ground that it will increase the taxes of the town. The town is taxed to build and support roads; why should it not be taxed to erect and maintain school-houses? Shall it be regarded a burden to provide school-houses, and not so to support highways?

It is said that putting the entire control of the schools into the hands of the school committee, is giving too much power to a few men. How shall we avoid it? One of two ways must be taken: either the legal voters of the town must decide by a majority vote each individual question relating to the schools, or these matters must be entrusted to a committee. The town raises money for the support of the poor, gives the entire charge of its application to the selectmen, and then holds them responsible. Why not do the same with the money raised for the support of schools? And which is better to give the trust to,—one committee who shall be held responsible for its fulfilment, or to give it to two committees, in such a way that neither can be held responsible?

Again, it is said that if the school committee have the entire control of the schools, parents can have little or no voice in selecting the teachers for their children, because they are not allowed to vote for a prudential committee. Is this statement the truth? Are not the school committee as willing to
consult the wishes, as well as the interests, of the several districts, in their selection of teachers as are the prudential committee? Have they not all the inducements to do this which the prudential committee have, and others besides? All the voters have an equal voice in the choice of school committee, and they must be chosen by ballot, thus ensuring a more careful selection. There may be a member of this committee for each school, whose nomination may be made by the voters of the district, so that each section shall be directly represented. If a smaller committee is better, each part of the town may be represented in turn. But the strongest argument in favor of the Town system is, that it does not, in the least degree, curtail the rights of the people; it is completely and purely democratic; it puts all citizens on the most perfect equality possible. Besides, it is the original system. The statute obligation to support schools rests upon the town alone. It may divide its territory into school districts, or not, as the people may elect. Some towns have never had the District system, and it was not until 1827 that districts were authorized to elect prudential committees who should contract with teachers. The teacher is the servant of the town,—paid by it, and subject to its control. The school is the town's school—entirely under its regulations. The schools of the town are supported by the taxation of all the citizens, and each citizen has a right to a voice in the expenditure of the money thus raised. This voice can be heard only in the choice of a committee authorized to select the teachers. The tax is levied equally on all parts of the town, for the express purpose of educating all the people, without distinction, and there should be equality of privileges. All sections of the town should have an equal length of good schools, which would be secured under the Town system, but which never can be secured under the present system. The District system does nothing for education which cannot be better done by the town. It fails to accomplish much which is secured by the other, and is more expensive than the Town system.

Is it said that this plan involves too great an outlay at this time of high prices? The improvements in school-houses here
recommended are an absolute necessity, and must be provided for, whichever system prevails. A less number of schoolhouses will be required under this plan; and whatever annual appropriation for the support of schools the town shall choose to make, can certainly be expended more economically than under the present system.

The committee are fully persuaded that the changes proposed in the plan which has now been given will greatly promote the best interests of our schools; and only those changes have been recommended which are actually demanded at the present time to place our schools in a satisfactory condition. Let every citizen give the whole subject a careful examination, and then act to secure to all our children the best school education which the town can provide.

A HIGH SCHOOL.

We should fail to perform the whole duty assigned to us, did we not call special attention to the urgent need of a Public High School in this town. We would have it distinctly understood, that the reorganization of the common schools advocated in this report is the first and most pressing want, which should receive immediate attention; but our school system is incomplete without the High School. It is not only the duty of the town to give to every child within its borders the elements of a good English education, but it is equally its duty to afford to all who have the ability and the inclination to pursue it, a more advanced course of study. Every family in the town is daily calling for the products of intelligent labor, in all the different vocations of this prosperous community. We want intelligent and skilful workmen in our manufactories and workshops, and in every department of industry; and we desire that our daughters shall become women of intelligence and refinement,—an ornament to the family and the social circle. These results are the fruits of education,—such an education as a good High School will enable our youth to obtain. And there are young persons in all parts of the town who are today seeking this kind of culture, and who must go abroad to obtain it if they cannot have it at home. And others would
gladly accept it if it were presented to them. By far the richest boon we can confer on our children at any time is a good education; neither can we in any other way so effectually promote the prosperity of the town. No one will deny that we need such a school in this town. Every day we hear parents asking for the privileges which such a school would afford for their children.

We now ask attention to some of the advantages of a good High School, as stated by those who know from experience their value. Dr. Sears, President of Brown University, uses the following language respecting them:

"The effect of this order of schools in developing the intellect of the Commonwealth is just beginning to be observed. They discover the treasures of native intellect that lie hidden among the people; make young men of superior mind conscious of their powers; bring those who are by nature destined to public service, to institutions suited to foster their talents; and, finally, give to the public, with all the advantages of education, men who otherwise might have remained in obscurity, or acted their part, struggling with embarrassments and difficulties."

We quote further from the last Report of the present Secretary of the Board of Education, Hon. Joseph White:

"Prominent among the advantages of these schools is the powerful and happy influence which they exert upon the schools of a lower grade. They present to the young pupils higher standards and more glittering prizes than their own schools can offer, and inspire their breasts with hope, and a noble courage to gain them. Thus they induce habits of order, obedience, self-control, and of patient and resolute industry, so essential to successful study; greater progress is made, and the standard of the lower schools is elevated." The school committee of Somerville, in their Annual Report, use the following language:

"Questions may be put at any time to pupils in the other schools to ascertain who in them are aiming for the high school, and it will be seen that even the youngest children in the primary school have started for it, and will feel its influence as an incitement and hope
through their whole course of instruction. Even if we throw out of the account those valuable results—the knowledge and training imparted in the high school itself—the good the school does in its influence upon all the other schools would amply compensate for its cost. Many a pupil who will never enter its walls as a student, will, nevertheless, be benefited by it, and feel the benefit all his life."

But this is not all. In the language of the committee of Grafton, its influence

—"goes from the school to the family. Thus a high school is adapted not merely for the cultivation and refinement of those who receive its immediate benefits, but it is calculated to exert a purifying and refining influence upon society in general,—to raise the tone of education, to set up worthy objects as the end of life, to incite new thought,—and start the rising generation from a higher level than that on which their fathers stood. Thus every parent has an interest in the high school, even though his children do not enjoy its advantages."

We make one more quotation pertinent to this subject from the report of the school committee of Amherst, a town having a smaller population and a less valuation than this town, and yet raising more money for the support of schools. They say:

"It is a remarkable fact, that the high school alone has saved to the town, during the last year, an expense greater than the entire appropriation for all the schools of the town during that period. The number of pupils in the high school averages about fifty. But for this school these pupils must have been sent out of town in order to gain no better advantages than they have here received. But upon a very moderate computation this would have involved a cost for each pupil of not less than $100 per year. In other words, the actual cost to the town of the instruction furnished in the high school during the last year, had this instruction been gained in any other available way, would have been at least $5000, or one thousand dollars more than the expenses of the town for all its schools for the same time."

Other advantages might be named, but these are sufficient to show that a well-conducted High School is a blessing which we cannot longer afford to lose. Does any one say we have a good substitute for the High School, in this town, in the Academy which has so long been established here? We have not
one word to say in disparagement of this time-honored institution, nor of the competent instructors who are now so faithfully laboring to train the students gathered there. But we must say, with all candor and kindness, that it does not now, and it cannot, give the instruction which a good High School would afford. And for this reason: it is now, and must continue to be, so long as supported by private tuition, a mixed school, taking in all ages, which necessitates so large a number of classes that it is impossible for any teacher to give them the instruction which could be given in a graded school having but few classes, and those composed of scholars nearly equal in attainments, as would be the case in the High School. And if the town is disposed to act in a generous spirit, there is no doubt that an arrangement might be made with the Trustees of the Academy, whereby the fund of that institution might be turned to the benefit of a High School. And we are sure that the present Principal of the Academy, and his Assistant, would prefer to be in a Public High School.

The law of the Commonwealth requires every town having four thousand inhabitants, to support a High School of the first grade ten months in the year, which school shall be for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the town. This town has that number of inhabitants, and is therefore liable to the penalty of the law if it neglect to establish such a school. But we hope the good people of this prosperous and wealthy town do not need to be compelled to do what is so obviously for their highest interests.

The one great argument generally urged against all improvements in our public schools, is the expense—the increased taxes. The fact is that the schools of Bridgewater are not an exorbitant expense, but are a true and great saving of expense to the town. "We cannot do without the instruction, and we cannot gain it so well or so cheaply in any other way. Because the expense comes to us in the form of taxation, it may seem heavier, but in reality it is much lighter." Our storekeepers tell us that about $3,000 worth of confectionery is sold by them annually—nearly as much as is now expended for our public schools. No one complains of this expense. The in-
quiry will naturally come, How much will all these improve-
ments cost? This will depend upon the kind of school-houses
to be built, and the quality of instruction which the people de-
sire to give their children. The valuation of the town is a
little less than two million dollars; hence the tax will be one
mill per dollar for every $2,000 raised for school purposes.
Let no man say we cannot afford to do all, and even more than
is here recommended, to secure the blessings of a good educa-
tion to every child in the good old town of Bridgewater.

Signed by the Committee,

ALBERT G. BOYDEN,
SPENCER LEONARD, JR.,
PHILANDER LEACH,
JOHN A. LATHROP.