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EIGHTH BIENNIAL REPORT

OF THE

Superintendent of Public Instruction

STATE OF MINNESOTA

FOR THE

SCHOOL YEARS ENDING JULY 31, 1893 AND 1894.

TWENTY-SEVENTH REPORT IN THE SERIES.

ST. PAUL, MINN.
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when the state has placed it within his reach. It is no easy task to give the deaf even a common school education, and every year it is delayed beyond fifteen years of age renders the task more difficult and more unsatisfactory.

Teachers and superintendents throughout the state have done excellent service in sending information to the writer, through the office of public instruction, or personally by mail. This is always gratefully received.

Application blanks, circulars, blanks for probate judges, and inquiries in relation to the school, will always receive prompt attention by addressing a letter to

J. L. NOYES,
Superintendent.

Faribault, Oct. 10, 1894.

SCHOOL FOR THE FEEBLE MINDED.

REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT.

Hon. W. W. Pendergast, Superintendent Public Instruction, St. Paul,

Dear Sir:—During the fiscal year 1892-93 the total number in attendance at the Minnesota School for Feeble-Minded was as follows: 193 males; 159 females; total, 352. During fiscal year 1893-94 it was 239 males; 217 females; total, 456.

The movement of population for the two years was as follows:

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Present Aug. 1, 1892.....	141	121	262
Admitted	77	76	153
Re-admitted	3	4	7
Absentees Aug. 1, 1892.....	45	31	76
Total	266	232	498
	Males.	Females.	Total.
Discharged and Dropped.....	23	19	42
Died	18	10	28
Absent July 31, 1894.....	49	29	78
Present July 31, 1894.....	179	174	350
Total	266	282	498

The applications have been as follows:

	Males.	Females.	Total.
1892-3	41	45	86
1893-4	56	66	122
Total for period	97	111	208
All previous applications	407	289	696

Total to July 31, 1894: 504 male, 400 female; total, 904. Average per month for two years, 12; or over 60 per annum for the entire period since the organization of the institution.

On the 31st day of May, 1894, when the population of the institution was 400, or the highest during the period, the children were classified as follows:

	Males.	Females.	Total.
In school and training department	76	73	149
In boys' custodia	123	...	123
In girls' custodia (Sunnyside)	110	110
In farm colony	18	...	18
Total	217	183	400

As by the statute any idiotic, feeble-minded or epileptic person is eligible to the institution, and as the test of eligibility for the former class is inability, by reason of such mental deficiency, to acquire an education in the common schools, the basis of classification becomes evident.

In the school and training department are found children that have been attending the public schools more or less without benefit, and those whose mental deficiency has entirely debarred them from such a privilege and yet who give promise of marked improvement when the special methods of the institution are applied to them, and all intermediate grades.

In undertaking the education of a feeble-minded child, we must assume in general that the possibilities of development are only limited by physical incapacities of communication between the mind and the exterior world. The psychologist recognizes at once a lack of will and that spontaneity that, in the normal child, keeps up a constant nerve activity, holds the mind continually in contact with outward objects and develops perception, conception and judgment without the teacher's assistance. For the normal child, the teacher has but to direct these spontaneous activities of the mind that they may be applied to the best advantage.

As judgment is the most complex of mental operations, it is the most imperfect product of the feeble mind.

The physician recognizes (since the time of Seguin) the dependence of these deficiencies upon imperfect nerve tissues, either of cells in the brain or conducting fibers. In some cases these deficiencies seem to exist from lack of exercise, and in others disease has destroyed the tissues and with them the possibility of restoring their functions.

The successful teacher of the feeble-minded, then, must first supply the will and establish the physical activities and gradually evolve volitional action on the part of the child. The educational process thus consists of an intimate combination of the inter-dependent physical and mental exercises, the physical element being predominant at the beginning, and the more distinctly intellectual element gradually evolving as the process continues.

If I were to present a scheme that would represent theoretically the work of our schools (in practice each case must be studied and treated according to the particular indication), it would be as follows:

FIRST STAGE — Practical Lessons:

- (a) Care of the person, keeping hands, face and teeth clean, clothing in order, hair combed, etc.
 - (b) Simple home duties, sweeping floors, dusting furniture, etc.
- (This kind of training devolves upon attendants and nurses, as well as teachers.)

SECOND STAGE — Kindergarten:

Behavior; marching, games and songs; form and color; simple finger occupation; weaving, sewing, folding, gifts.

THIRD STAGE — Manual Training:

Boys and Girls—Learning use of needle and thread by means of forms and leather strings; over and over-stitching and basting.

Girls—Straw-braiding and hemming, darning and knitting.

Boys—Outlining on wood and brass from traced patterns with repoussé tools, polishing metal, hammock weaving, etc.

Literary Exercises—

Words from objects and cards.

Use of pencil for tracing and copying.

Distinguishing one from more than one.

Directions and distances in school-building and surrounding grounds.

Exercises in articulation.

FOURTH STAGE — Industrial Training:

Boys—Brush-making, scroll sawing, repoussé; farming, dairying and care of stock; gardening.

Girls—Making articles requiring only over and over stitching and hemming; making plain garments; hemstitching; dressmaking; lacemaking; knitting; fancy work.

Literary Exercises—

More advanced reading, writing, orthography, through the ordinary primary exercises to reading in United States history, and independent exercises in composition and letter-writing.

Numbers—through fundamental, operations and tables of weights and measures.

Geography—through the course of primary work, etc.

Knowledge of things—from object lessons and charts, and excursions to woods and fields.

Visitors to our schools often express surprise at the bright appearance of many of the children, and wonder how they happen to be here. It must be remembered that many of our pupils have tried the public schools, and being unable to derive benefit from them by reason of some form or degree of mental incapacity have dropped out. This school opens a new opportunity to such where they can advance to the degree of their capacity.

Of interest in this connection is a portion of a paper prepared by Prof. Will S. Monroe of Stanford University, Cal., which I quote as follows:

“Believing such abnormalities to be much more common in our graded schools than is usually supposed, I addressed letters of inquiry some months ago to several hundred public school teachers in California. I asked these teachers to observe the physical and mental defects of the children under their charge and to send me their observations. These results, collected and condensed, are as follows:

1. Number of pupils observed.....	10,842
2. Number with irregularities in features.....	318
3. Number with irregularities in movements.....	312
4. Number with irregularities in speech.....	345
5. Number maimed or paralyzed.....	98
6. Number with history of fits during school life.....	46
7. Number of low nutrition, pale, thin, delicate.....	754
8. Number who are mentally dull in school.....	1,054
9. Number who are feebly gifted mentally.....	268
10. Number of imbeciles and idiots.....	6

"The test is in no sense scientific or conclusive, but it is suggestive in at least this: that there are many children in our public schools who could be more economically and wisely trained in special institutions than in the state schools where they now are, and many more who, although not positively feeble-minded, skirt the border land of abnormality, and because of their large numbers—nearly ten per cent of the whole public school enrollment—should receive the thoughtful attention of teachers and specialists."

There are very few properly classifying in our school department that do not improve decidedly under training, especially if it begins before they are established in bad habits and mannerisms. As the bad in those around us is the most easily understood, so it is first acquired by the feeble-minded, being best comprehended by them. From seven to twelve years is the best period to begin work with this class.

It often requires the work of a second or third year to determine the degree of improvement of which a child is susceptible, and when the improvement begins it often increases quite rapidly for a while.

It should be distinctly understood, however, that a feeble-minded child never becomes normal. The question is not one of curing the person, but of developing the mental capacity in each case so far as the capacity for development will permit.

On the other hand there are very few individuals whose mental development cannot be stimulated if sufficient time and care be expended upon it.

The story of Sylvanus and other similar ones, so often told, are not fictitious (though sometimes misunderstood); but the application of public funds to the education and amelioration of this class necessarily involves an adjustment of the expenses to the recognized good accomplished, on some plan of strict catholicity. Hence the systematic training of the school and manual rooms can be continuously applied only to those children whose improvement is unquestioned, while for those less susceptible of improvement, every effort should be exerted to provide them with the comforts of a cheerful home and such instruction, entertainment and amusement as they are capable of appreciating.

Respectfully submitted,
A. C. ROGERS,
Superintendent.