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# **FIFTEENTH BIENNIAL REPORT**

OF THE

## **Superintendent of Public Instruction.**

OF MINNESOTA

For the School Years Ending July 31,  
1907 and 1908.

**THIRTY-FOURTH REPORT OF THE SERIES**

**JOHN W. OLSEN, Superintendent**

1908  
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## SCHOOL FOR FEEBLE-MINDED AND COLONY FOR EPILEPTICS, FARIBAULT

### REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT.

Hon. J. W. Olsen, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Sir: I submit the following report concerning the School for Feeble Minded and Colony for Epileptics, for the two years ending July 31, 1908.

During the year ending July 31, 1907, there were 1,148 pupils and patients in attendance. During the year ending July 31, 1908, there were 1,128. The average attendance for the same years was 1,041 and 1,066 respectively.

On August 1, 1908, the enrollment was 1,128 classified as follows:

	Male.	Female.	Total.
Feeble-minded, high-grade .....	117	99	216
Feeble-minded, middle-grade .....	143	116	259
Feeble-minded, low-grade .....	205	175	380
Idio-imbecile .....	126	109	235
Idiots .....	21	17	38
	617	516	1,128

While an institution of this kind is, in a broad, general way, custodial in its character, from the fact that the great majority of its pupils are either so extremely defective that their personal care requires a large amount of attention, or their mental capacity is so meager to enable them to maintain a full independent citizenship, so that their interests and usefulness are best promoted by a permanent guardianship, yet the whole institution community in which they are citizens is a school—a complex system of diversified training in which manual occupations are predominant.

The formal school work is practically the same as when last reported, the classes consisting of:

#### SPECIAL TEACHERS HAVE CHARGE OF:

First kindergarten  
Second kindergarten  
First primary  
Second primary  
First intermediate  
Second intermediate

Articulation.  
Medical gymnastics  
Orchestral, vocal and band work

The second intermediate division corresponds closely with the seventh grade of the public schools.

As stated heretofore, education by doing is the key note of progress for the feeble-minded so that manual activities are introduced wherever possible. The following are some of the principal occupations:

Basketry	Dressmaking	Sewing
Brush making	Gardening	Sloyd
Cabinet work	Ironing	Shoe repairing
Carpentry	Lace making	Tailoring
Dairying	Mattress making	Weaving carpets
Darning	Net work	Weaving rugs

#### BACKWARD CHILDREN.

For the benefit of inquiring teachers, permit me to say a word concerning backward children and eligibility for admission to the school.

Under the statute all children "whose defects (mental) prevent them from receiving proper training in public schools" are eligible for admission. For convenience of discussion, we may classify children, as they are found in families generally as:

- A. Average normal.
- B. Backward.
- C. Feeble-minded.

Of course, the line of demarcation is not sharply drawn between the normal and the backward children, nor between the backward and the feeble-minded children; and the point at which a teacher decides that a given child is mentally incapable of acquiring an education in the common schools, will vary with the ability of the teacher to bring out most in slow children, the character of the home influence and the attitude of the child's companions. When that point is determined, however, by the teacher and the public school authorities, the school for feeble-minded will receive the child.

By a backward child, I mean one who is simply slow to learn, but one whose mental nature is well balanced; who, in proportion to his mental grasp, possesses good judgment; who, while he learns slowly, reasons correctly, and who possesses that indefinable something which we call "common sense" together with the power of application, so that his progress, even though it be slow, is continuous. Such children may not be able to make sufficient progress in the grades of the common schools to be kept in the regular classes but if proper opportunity is given them they will develop into good average citizens. The teacher may not recognize this condition from their work with books and pronounce them feeble-minded. The child must be studied with reference to his aptitude and application to other things coming into his life. Boys of this character may be dropped from the public schools as failures who afterwards become successful business men. Such pupils are occasionally found among those who are pronounced feeble-minded and received into this institution, and when this occurs, they receive the training here that enables them to return to citizenship. It is the training of these pupils that should be the special function of the so-called special classes in public schools and there is a necessity for just such classes in every community where a group of such children can be found. Of course, into these classes the truly feeble-minded children are

apt to be forced by the parents who do not recognize the limitations of their own children. These limitations, however, are duly recognized in time by the teacher and the situation adjusts itself. The system of medico-pedagogic examination and inspection of public school children will, I believe, eventually make the diagnosis of these cases more accurate and become an important factor in assigning them to the proper places for care and training.

The feeble-minded child, even of the highest grade, lacks in ability for application; or should he possess this in a reasonable degree, he lacks capacity for good judgment and the common sense so necessary to properly interpret his own relation to others. He is always, in a greater or less degree, out of harmony with the outer world. His capacity for intellectual development or acquiring skill in manual pursuits is limited, although his greatest capacity is manifested manually, especially when the operations are simple and involve repetition rather than originality or variation. He remains always a child. For him the gently restricted environment of the college community for the simple is the best known haven.

A. C. ROGERS, Superintendent.