

# Citizen Control of the Citizen's Business

TORONTO'S CITIZENS CAN CONTROL TORONTO'S AFFAIRS ONLY THROUGH FREQUENT, PROMPT, ACCURATE AND PERTINENT INFORMATION WITH REGARD TO TORONTO'S BUSINESS.

ISSUED BY THE  
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## Toronto's Children are Her Greatest Asset

During the two school years 1916-17 and 1917-18 Toronto's public schools made a notable record in conserving this asset.

Thousands of years in school, in the aggregate, were saved to the children:

Thousands of dollars in home expenditures were saved to the parents:

Thousands of dollars were saved to the taxpayers:

and

Thousands of children were made more happy and contented and will make more efficient citizens as a result.

When a child makes slower progress through the grades than he should—failing of regular promotion—he is said to be “retarded”

When a child is older than he should be for his grade, he is considered “over-age”

When a child leaves school before completing the minimum essentials of education for a Canadian citizen—the regular public school course—he is said to have “dropped out” or been eliminated.

Retardation, over-ageness and dropping out are three chief sources of economic, human and social waste.

It costs, on the average, about \$50.00 to keep one child in school one year, whether he learns anything or not. A boy or girl between 15 and 18 years of age, commencing work, will render services or produce values to the extent, say, of \$600 per year.

When 3000 children unnecessarily fail of promotion, 3000 school years are practically lost—in some cases not quite lost and, in others, worse than lost—at an expense to the taxpayers of \$150,000.

When 3000 children enter on their life work—whether after their public school course or their high school course—one year later than necessary, there is an economic loss to the community of, say, \$1,800,000, or about half of the total cost of maintaining the schools in 1918.

On the other hand, when 3000 school years are saved by wise administration, the children, the taxpayers and the community benefit in like amounts.

The Bureau of Municipal Research is about to issue an interim report on “Measurement of Educational Waste in the Public Schools” as one chapter of its survey of the educational needs and resources of the city. This report is statistical and technical and, therefore, more suitable for the consideration of professional educationists than for general reading. We list below, therefore, some of the more striking conclusions of the study, and the more important constructive suggestions based thereon.

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.

1. There were 5,853 more children in the public schools in September, 1918, than in September, 1916. On the basis of 1916, this increase would have been accompanied by an increase of 3,300 in the number of children older than the standard ages for their grades. As a matter of fact, **there were only 7 more over-age children in 1918 than in 1916.** This means a much more economical use of class-room space and much more efficient use of the time of children and teachers.
2. In the aggregate, over 6,000 years of child life were saved for productive usefulness in two school years, or 3,000 per school year.
3. The number of children more than 4 years over the ages for their grades was 280 in 1916, and 242 in 1918. These numbers represent for the most part foreign children coming into school at a late age or hopelessly subnormal children that no ordinary school could reach. The majority should be in special schools.
4. The chief saving was effected among children from one to four years over-age.
5. The percentage of over-age children was reduced from 56.54% to 51.39%.
6. The percentage of over-age children was reduced in every grade of the public school course, except one.
7. The percentage of over-age children was reduced among children of every age from 5 to 14 years.

8. The percentage of children younger than the standard was increased from 9.18% to 10.72%.
9. The percentage of such under-age children increased between the Senior First and Senior Third, both inclusive, and ages six and ten, both inclusive.

## **SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS AS A BASIS FOR DISCUSSION.**

The causes of retardation, over-ageness and dropping-out are very thoroughly understood in Toronto, as is evidenced by the 1913 and later reports of the Toronto Board of Education. It is quite unnecessary to discuss these causes. Nor is it absolutely necessary, although quite desirable, to estimate the amount of the human and financial loss resulting from preventable school waste. This is everywhere acknowledged as a serious matter to the city, the province and the nation. Combatting the waste requires two things:

1. Means of measuring gains.
2. Weapons of offence.

In measuring, two things are demanded:

- (a) An accepted standard.
- (b) Equal divisions of that standard.

In Toronto we have no accepted standard for the length of the elementary school course for the child of ordinary ability and energy. Some place it at six years, some at six and one-half years, and some practically at eight years, while the average time spent above the Kindergarten seems to be seven years and three months. It is true, of course, that children vary in ability, but this is no reason why we should not establish norms for purposes of mass measurement and as indications of proper treatment in cases of individuals. Neither is there agreement as to length of the units of the course. All agree on the length of the last four grades, most on the first, while for the other three there is great disagreement, both in theory and practice. We have in effect a foot rule of varying length, with inches marked thereon of lengths varying from one school to another, and from time to time. Measurements of certain phases of education are possible and necessary. Why not agree on a measuring stick which, applied over a term of years, will indicate the lines of advance?

The following suggestions are offered as a basis for discussion :

1. That the Provincial Department of Education be requested to allow the Board to adopt a seven-year course of study above the Kindergarten.
2. That this course be divided into seven grades of one year each, and that the present anachronistic division of book-forms be abolished.
3. That each of the seven grades be divided into an "A" and "B" division, each equivalent to a half-year, so that when a child fails of promotion he will not need to repeat a whole year's work. This would facilitate double promotion by minimizing the length of the necessary jump.
4. That each division, on completing its work, proceed immediately to the work of the next division, no matter what the date may be, and that transference from division to division be frequent and easy.
5. That special teachers, for individual or small-group instruction, be employed to make such transfers easy for children capable of making rapid progress without affecting their health.
6. That children be graduated when they are ready to graduate, but that worth-while work be provided for early graduates until such time as they may be admitted to the high schools.
7. That as soon as authority is obtained, if necessary, high schools admit pupils twice a year or oftener.
8. That in every school of eight rooms or over a special class, or special classes, be formed for atypical children, whether of the "slow" or the "rapid progress" group.
9. That all feeble-minded children be removed from the regular grades and special classes for normal children, and be segregated in classes where they can receive the sort of education to which they respond. This should be done at once, even if it is necessary to rent special accommodation for the purpose. The extra expense would soon be offset by the diminishing membership of the schools due to the more rapid progress of children through the grades.

10. That in the early grades one-half of each day be devoted to manual work and physical education, and that in the later grades greater opportunity be given for such work.
11. That assistants to principals be decided on not according to the number of children in the school alone, but that the number of foreign children, the social and economic conditions of the neighborhood and other non-arithmetical considerations be taken into account.
12. That, if necessary, the right to allow greater lee-way with regard to the course of study in particular schools and in individual cases be obtained from the provincial authorities.
13. That capacity to perform the next term's work be the only consideration in determining the promotion of a child from one grade or half-grade to another—the principal and teacher concerned being the final authorities.
14. That portable projection apparatus, including motion picture machines, be provided for every school to assist in teaching geography, history, nature study and literature, decreasing the time spent on these subjects and improving the product.
15. That every teacher have at least two divisions in her room, teaching and seat work alternating, and that a short time each day be devoted to individual teaching by the regular class teacher.

Most of these suggestions have appeared before in official reports and public discussions. A few—such as 13, 14 and 15, are in practical operation, at least partially, in some schools. It is time that some action be taken either by rejecting them or putting them into general practice.

The Interim Report entitled "Measurement of Educational Waste in the Toronto Public Schools" will be off the press shortly. Anyone on the general mailing list, or any other citizen, may obtain a copy by writing or telephoning to this office.

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