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EDITORIAL

The New Hampshire state bureau of educational research, established and maintained by the General Education Board, but organized under the administration of the state superintendent of public instruction, has achieved noteworthy results in the hands of its energetic director, Mr. H. A. Brown. These are set forth in the recent annual report of the state superintendent. The general aims of the bureau are the demonstration of the social needs to be met by the school, the formulation of courses to meet these needs, and the development of methods to make the courses effective. Specifically, the bureau has carried on five different lines of investigation:

1. Nearly four thousand pupils were tested for their ability in silent reading, and the results arranged as norms readily used by teachers and superintendents. Striking differences in the reading ability of pupils in the same class were revealed, and the question is raised whether it is not worse than futile to attempt simultaneous instruction with such heterogeneous material. School systems of substantial equality in results differ widely in the amount of time devoted

to reading. Pupils were found in the third and fourth grades with as high reading capacity as pupils in the high school. Such pupils might well be excused from formal work in reading, and encouraged to devote their attention to other subjects in which they are less proficient. It would seem that ability to read is closely related to ability to study, and properly directed and supervised study is likely to enhance reading ability.

2. A beginning was made in the study of the social needs of arithmetic content. This is a large undertaking and will require much time and labor to complete. Perhaps there is no greater service that a state department could render than to make a thorough survey of each section of the state with regard to the resources available for material in arithmetic work. The published results of such a survey would be a mine of information for teachers, would tend to definitize the teaching of arithmetic, and would furnish a basis for determining the arithmetical materials needed in different vocations.

3. An extensive enquiry was made regarding the capacity of pupils to read thought from the Latin page after from one to four years' study of the subject in the high school. There seems to be little improvement after the second year, and ability at the end of the fourth year is meager out of all proportion to the time, energy and money devoted to Latin study and teaching. Pupils who have had little formal instruction in Latin grammar show greater ability to sense the significance of a grammatical construction than those who have had much formal drill in grammar. Latin instruction either has no effect upon or is a positive detriment to the clear, forcible, elegant use of English.

4. A similar study for French is not yet completed.

5. A study of methods in stenography compared the value of the direct method, in which pupils take meaningful notes from the beginning, with that of the formal method, where pupils spend months drilling on symbols before taking any dictation. This is still in progress.

Plans for future prosecution of the work include studies with different types of reading material; a study of transfer in spelling, which will take account of differences in technique of instruction; a study of the effect of different systems of handwriting upon the subsequent, uncontrolled handwriting of the pupils; and the development of a workable scale in English composition. It is to be hoped that the withdrawal of Mr. Brown to normal school work in a distant state will in no way interfere with the realization of these plans.

J. C. B.