

As might be expected, teachers' examinations, no matter how worthy their object created quite a disturbance. Superintendent Sheats, who was largely responsible for the establishment of a system of state teachers' certificates based on uniform examinations, provided some interesting comments in this area in 1894.

I (Superintendent Sheats) felt that the standard of the ideal teacher was entirely too low in every respect . . . . I realized that the matter of examination would of necessity have to be taken partially out of the hands of local authorities, often incapable in point of education of properly conducting them, and too often biased in their judgment of the fitness of candidates to teach by questions of necessity, relationship, politics, personal advantage, spite, or other influence . . . . It was apparent that if there was to be anything like a State school system in fact as well as in name, the mode of examinations and the requirements in the same could not be left to the caprice of county school authorities, even as good as some were.

Superintendent Sheats prepared and had enacted by the Legislature, a bill providing for uniform state examinations and certificates based on such examinations. This bill cancelled several hundred unexpired five year certificates, or certificates that, as Superintendent Sheats put it, "were five-year ostensibly, but as custom had run, in reality perpetual certificates." It was recognized that this abrupt change worked to the disadvantage of a number of good and competent teachers.

It would have been a pleasing task, had it been possible, to have framed a law that would, while effectually reaching the latter (incompetent teachers), have recognized and protected the former (capable teachers); but to reach the deep seated disease, it was found necessary to cut through some good sound flesh. None regretted this more than myself.

Given time and faithful execution, the law will fully vindicate its wisdom and verify to the fullest extent the promises and fondest hopes of its friends, and accomplish for our own State what is claimed it has done for other states in which it has been tested.

It is admitted that a missing link or two in the law had to be supplied by official interpretation; these were promptly furnished and there was not the least difficulty found in putting in operation the provisions of the law in seven-eighths of the counties in the State; in the one-eighth, it existed more in the imagination and obstinate blindness of those charged with its execution, and who were at the same time hunting grounds for evasion.

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