

MANATEE COUNTY

Hon. W. N. Sheats, State Superintendent Public Instruction, Tallahassee, Florida

My Dear Sir--I have the pleasure of submitting herewith report on condition, etc., of our schools, in response to your favor of the 18th inst. All things considered, the past scholastic year has been one of more than average prosperity, although nothing of extraordinary moment has transpired to make it an epoch in the history of our public schools.

Present School Board.--I can but feel that our present School Board has done a good part by our schools, for which they deserve much credit; though all has not been accomplished that was hoped for, yet we have cause for gratification over the amount of good accomplished, and may well look forward to still greater results for the near future in the general upbuilding of the cause of education in our county.

Growth in Attendance and Efficiency.--My last annual report shows, as you have doubtless noted, a marked increase over previous years in enrollment and attendance; our reports show also that the number of pupils who pursue the more advanced studies of the common school curriculum increases each year. These two facts alone, clearly indicate the growth and efficiency of our schools. I am more impressed every day with my responsibility and the importance and necessity of our schools keeping pace with other improved methods in the great industries of life, and the necessity of my teachers being better equipped for their work--the better to satisfy the demands of an intelligent public.

Classification and Gradation.--Since assuming my official position it has been my earnest desire to unify the work in the county. A system of classification and gradation has been adopted, as far as practicable, and its beneficent effects are already apparent. We have a good corps of teachers doing good work, but we feel they should be better teachers doing better work.

Influence of Institutes and County High School.--For the best results along this line, I build largely my hopes upon our County Normal or Teachers' Institutes and our County High School. I believe our Institute work marks a new era in public education in our county. The every-day problems of the school room are explained, the subjects to be taught are analyzed and simplified, methods are discussed and ideals created; the teachers return to their work strengthened, inspired for greater endeavor, prepared for closer study and better comprehension of the meaning of their work.

Wants of Teachers.--The wants of our teachers are two-fold--more skill in methods of instruction, more accurate and broader scholarship and wider information. In organizing the County Institute, or summer school for teachers, it is a great stride towards supplying these needs; still, I doubt sometimes if many of my people fully realize how great a benefit these institutes will prove to them as individuals and as a community; such an appreciation must come to them by degrees.

Success of High School.--Under the able management of Prof. Thos. C. Walton and his efficient assistants, the success of our County High School has exceeded our expectations with an enrollment of 148 pupils last term, and with an assurance of a larger attendance the present term. On this school we will depend largely in the future as a source of supply for teachers in our elementary schools. I am fully convinced that nothing will raise the teaching