

wishing all continued progress, and that Florida may soon be a great leader.

I am, sincerely yours,

J. T. BEEKS,

County Superintendent.

OSCEOLA COUNTY

Kissimmee, Fla.

Hon. Wm. N. Sheats, State Superintendent Public Instruction:

Dear Sir--Notwithstanding the fact of a non-increasing population in this county for the past two years, I have to report a large enrollment and a large average attendance in the schools of the county for the year 1896, and also for 1894-95. I do not attribute this improvement solely to any one cause--several have aided in its creation.

Success of System, on What Dependent.--The success of our public school system depends mainly (nay almost entirely) upon the teachers and patrons, or parents and guardians. Given true teachers and educationally alive and earnestly co-operative patrons and our system or any system cannot but be a grand success. Recognizing this fact, I have striven to come into close and frequent contact with both teachers and patrons, endeavoring to awaken a due concern for their children's highest well being in the minds of the patrons. By repeated visitation of the schools and talks with the children and teachers I have sought to enthuse both with an ambition to achieve best results.

High School Supplies Teachers.--Another cause for the advance experienced in the improvement noticeable in our staff of teachers. The relation of our present staff of teachers employed in the district, or out of town schools, to the pioneer teachers of this frontier county of only ten years ago, is one not of comparison, but of contrast. Many of our present teachers have been educated and trained in our County High School, this fact together with the stricter and juster examination received by our teachers at the Summer Normal Schools held in Kissimmee in 1895, explain the improved status of our teaching force.

Benefits of Free Text-Books.--The chief cause, however, of the gains mentioned, and also of the better work, that I am convinced is being done this year, is the fact that at the commencement of the present term were introducing the system of free text-books for the primary and grammar schools of the county. This I know positively has brought into the school and kept therein many children whose parents were either too poor or too indifferent to purchase the necessary text-books, and too proud to accept them as a gift, feeling I can easily understand and sympathize with. I am persuaded also that a gain of at least 25 per cent. will be made this term, over previous ones in many of our schools, in the quality and quantity of the work done. I dare venture the statement that in 50 per cent. of the schools of this State, outside of the towns, the work being done is discounted 25 per cent. at least for the want of a sufficiency of proper text-books. It is, I am sure, a "penny wise and pound foolish policy" to attempt to economize in our public school system by not supplying the text-books with the teachers. In all country districts where the patrons themselves lack education, it is almost as necessary to provide the one as the other.