

the schools, causing the Board this year to take a step backward by shortening the school term one month.

The Course of Study.--The course of study prepared in 1896, having been slightly revised last year, is still in use. It has been helpful in systematizing the work in the county. We expect to revise and improve the course this year.

Teachers' Association and Reading Circle.--Very much of the success our teachers have achieved in their school work is attributable to the Polk County Teachers' Association and Teachers' Reading Circle. This association meets about once each month on Saturday, during the school term, and such subjects are discussed as will help the teachers in their work, and arouse a greater interest in education on the part of patrons and friends. While attendance at these meetings is not compulsory, yet every teacher is expected to attend if he can possibly do so. Out of 96 white teachers in this county, at least 80 per cent. are reading the books selected by the Teachers' Reading Circle.

Some Needed Legislation--Abolish 5 Mill Maximum.--I submit the following suggested changes in our present school law, which if the Legislature can be induced to make, I think the schools will be greatly benefited; unless some of the legal restrictions and limitations can be removed, our schools must cease to advance, and by a natural law they will necessarily retrograde:

- 1st. Remove the 5-mill constitutional limit for school purposes.
- 2d. Place the sole power of levying tax for school purposes in the hands of the County Boards of Public Instruction, who, by virtue of position, are better qualified to act in such matters, and being elective, are thereby nearer the people.
- 3d. Have members of the School Boards elected for six years; provided, that in the first election one shall be elected for two years, one for four years and one for six years.
- 4th. Make Third Grade certificates good for one year only, and re-issuable but once.

J. L. HOLLINGSWORTH,
County Superintendent.

PUTNAM COUNTY

I herewith submit my bi-ennial report for scholastic years from July 1st, 1896, to June 30th, 1898.

Decrease in Schools.--We have had to abandon a few rural schools for want of a sufficient number of pupils to maintain the required average. We have not lost the pupils to the county, for most of them have moved to the towns, where they could get better school facilities and their parents obtain employment.

School Sites and New Buildings.--Our Board has erected several new school buildings, sometimes aided by the patrons. We build all our school houses on similar models, one a small and the other a large size. The school lots or sites are always donated to the Board by the patrons.

Furniture and Equipments.--Some outlay has been made in purchasing furniture,