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Office of State Superintendent of Free Schools

Letter Transmitting Report of The
State Superintendent of Free
Schools to His Excellency,
Howard M. Gore, Gover-
nor of West Virginia



CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

DECEMBER 1, 1926

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

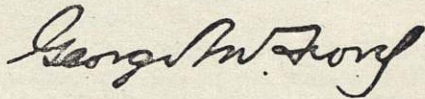
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Charleston, West Virginia
December 1, 1926.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY, HOWARD M. GORE,
Governor of West Virginia:

Sir:

In accordance with Section 24 of Chapter 45 of the Code of West Virginia, I hereby transmit to you, and through you to the Legislature, the Twenty-seventh Biennial Report of the State Department of Education, for the biennial period ending June 30, 1926.



State Superintendent of Free Schools.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Charleston

December 1, 1926.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY, HOWARD M. GORE,
Governor of West Virginia:

Sir:

I have the honor to transmit to you herewith my third biennial report of the State Department of Education.

During the last two years the department has made a careful survey of educational matters. In this investigation the primary aim has been to note the trends in the various types of education with the view of making better plans for carrying on the work in the future. The results of this study have been published in a separate volume entitled "The Financing of Education in West Virginia".

In order to see the justification of the recommendations which follow, it will be necessary to refer briefly a few facts revealed by this survey.

A school mortality table for the entire school system extending from the first grade through the university reveals that there are two places at which the schools are losing an unusually large percentage of their pupils. These places are at the end of the sixth grade and at the end of the eighth grade. Twenty-five per cent of the sixth grade pupils do not go on to the seventh grade, and fifty-two per cent of the eighth grade pupils do not enter high school.

A further analysis of this mortality shows that it is heaviest in the one, two and three room schools. In these schools there are only thirteen per cent as many pupils in the eighth grade as there are in the first grade. Whereas in the city schools there are fifty-two per cent as many pupils in the eighth grade as in the first grade.

The survey reveals also that practically five-sixths of the pupils of the State are found in the non-independent districts of the State and it is in these districts that conditions are such as to warrant most serious consideration. For an example, there are in the non-independent districts of the State 296,006 elementary pupils and only 16,700 high school pupils; whereas in the independent districts there are only 57,158 elementary pupils and yet we find 15,724 high school pupils. In other words, we find in the independent districts one high school pupil to every three and one-half elementary school pupils, and in the non-independent districts we find only one high school pupil to every seventeen elementary pupils. If the same ratio obtained in the rural districts as in the city districts we would have 81,400 high school pupils instead of 16,700. The fact that there are probably 65,000 boys and girls in these districts of high school age who are not attending high school should be a matter of great concern to the State. The leadership of the State is largely

vested in these boys and girls and if their opportunities are cut off with an elementary education we can but surmise what the consequences will be.

We are glad to point out that the conditions in the independent districts are very close to standard in almost every point of comparison with national standards. The chief reason for these conditions is the amount and character of educational leadership in charge of the schools in these districts. There are 557 superintendents, supervisors and principals in charge of 74,000 pupils in the independent districts. There are only 132 superintendents and supervisors in charge of 313,000 pupils in the non-independent districts, and it is in these isolated regions that supervision is most needed and most difficult.

In the last analysis the school conditions that prevail in the various sections of the State are traceable to economic conditions. Consequently, the recommendations that follow are designed to remedy the economic inequalities to the extent that all children of the State may have equal opportunities in so far as it is possible for at least an elementary education.

IMPORTANT PROPOSALS FOR SCHOOL LEGISLATION

The two major propositions. As an introduction to this report you will find compressed into brief simple statements the two main propositions which, in my judgment, need and deserve the immediate and careful attention of our Legislature. Following these statements will be several important reports on special divisions of the educational service with recommendations worthy of consideration; also, tables of statistics giving complete information relative to school affairs in West Virginia. The two main topics referred to are:

- I. THE EQUALIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY.
- II. THE EQUALIZATION OF SCHOOL TAXES.

After careful study and observation I have decided that most of the school problems in West Virginia are related directly to the two propositions. The statements which follow are intended to set out some of the principal factors and to propose certain specific remedies.

I. Inequalities in Educational Opportunities in West Virginia.—We have abundant evidence that the children living in different sections of West Virginia do not have equal educational opportunities. Any fair-minded citizen when convinced of the truth of this statement will be ready to support any reasonable program to guarantee proper opportunities for all children of all the people of our well-to-do State. Now let us examine the following:

1. The length of our school term varies from 180 days in 53 districts to 160 or less days in 344 districts in the State. While our law provides for a minimum school term, many districts in the State are not able to provide the legal term of school.
2. School buildings and equipment vary from the finest to the most meager. In some localities the boys and girls

go to school in buildings of the most modern construction, beautiful in appearance, heated, ventilated, luxuriously furnished and equipped with books and apparatus to make the subjects of study plain and attractive. Other groups of children are crowded into school houses that may be termed "mere huts," unpainted, bare, poorly heated, rudely furnished, without library or equipment to supplement the routine of text-book work. Such buildings with their insanitary outbuildings endanger the health of the boys and girls and offer poor influences and incentives for education. The value of school buildings and equipment per 25 pupils ranges from \$1,372 in a typical rural county to \$4,750 in a typical city.

3. The pupils in our less favored districts, as a rule, have poorly trained teachers, while the richer and more progressive districts provide highly trained teachers for the boys and girls.

In five typical counties the percentage having normal school diplomas is.....	34%
In five typical counties not having wealthy centers, the percentage of teachers having normal school diplomas is.....	3%
In the cities referred to above, the average salary for teachers is.....	\$1,232.90
In the counties referred to above, the average salary for teachers is.....	742.63

4. In the wealthier and more progressive centers the schools are supervised by experienced experts, and the boys and girls are given special instruction in music, drawing and other subjects that add usefulness and culture. In more than three-fourths of the districts no local supervision or special instruction is provided.

Other items might be added under this heading, but enough has been stated above to prove the proposition that "Educational opportunities have not been equalized in West Virginia."

The writer assumes that it is not necessary to argue that each child in America is supposed to have advantages that will give him a fair chance to prepare to fight the battles of life on equal terms with others. Equality of opportunity is one of the basic American principles. It is the clear duty of the officers in a Republic like ours to make equality a realization as well as a policy.

II. Inequalities in School Taxes and School Support. For more than a half century the voters of the several districts in West Virginia have testified by their ballots from time to time, to a desire to support a free public school system by taxation. It is evident that our citizens as a whole are not inclined to complain about school taxes, unless it is apparent that the results of teaching are not satisfactory, or that the burden of school taxation is unduly heavy as compared with that of some other sections of the State. Under present conditions in West Virginia there is basis for dissatisfaction because of the great inequalities in the weight of the load of school support in the various school units of the Commonwealth. The statements which follow prove the foregoing assertion:

1. The per capita wealth back of each pupil (based upon enumeration) in the different districts of the State varies from \$841 in Jumping Branch District of Summers county, to \$14,664 in Clay District, Monongalia county. It will be seen that the financial ability to support schools in the district last named is sixteen times as great as that in the poorest district referred to. Attention is directed to table No. 1 which indicates the amount of taxable property behind each enumerated pupil of the State and the great inequalities in such ability. It seems strange, indeed, that we have established and maintained a system that leaves the ability to support adequate schools to the chance resources and wealth of small units of area in our State. The consideration of this statement and a study of the table referred to will surely move any lawmaker to seek an equalizing remedy.
2. Assuming that assessed valuations are fixed with a fair degree of uniformity, the range in the rates of school levies shown in table No. 1 is astonishing to one who has not had occasion to study the inequalities in educational financial burdens and efforts. The table referred to shows that the lowest total school levy in the State in 1923 was 37 cents, in Freeman's Creek District, Lewis County, and the highest \$2.22 on the one hundred dollars of valuation, in Ripley Independent District in Jackson county. Upon comparison you will be impressed with the great inequalities and the unscientific nature of school support in our State.

Why should the man living in one district pay school taxes at a rate six times as high as that paid by another citizen living in a more favored section of the same State?

The makers and administrators of our laws must answer the following questions:

(a) Shall we encourage citizens to live in and develop the resources of the poorer sections of our State?

(b) Shall we compel citizens undertaking to live in such sections to pay an unfair share of school taxes to educate the boys and girls, many of whom will become citizens and producers in the wealthier centers of the State?

III. SHOULD ALL BOYS AND GIRLS HAVE EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES?

We now come to a consideration of the positive side of one of our chief educational problems. We are faced with the dilemma of either surrendering the cherished American ideal of equality of opportunity or of setting about to make the conditions square with the ideal. In considering this question the following propositions should be considered:

1. A thorough elementary education for all of our citizens will form the only secure broad base for the structure of our democracy. We are urging all of the citizens to vote, and with that program should go an insistence upon thorough training for all, that the voting may be in the best interests of our State and country.
2. The persons in West Virginia who cannot read or write number 69,413. This fact shows that the school machinery is not sufficiently efficient to guarantee training for all of our citizens. We should have classes for adults to wipe out present illiteracy; and a compulsory school law so administered as to make illiteracy in our State impossible in the future.

3. For a government like ours, unselfish trained leadership is quite as important as a mass of voters with general training. It is necessary for a State to provide an effective system of elementary schools and high schools to discover such leadership, and to support higher institutions of learning to give technical training to those who are called upon to fill important places in private and public life.
4. Education must be considered an investment by the State to preserve and promote its own best interests.
5. The annual income of each person gainfully employed is \$1,789.16 in the five States ranking highest in school efficiency; \$999.07 in the five states ranking lowest. West Virginia should invest liberally in education to guarantee a corresponding liberal income to the citizens and the State.
6. The average savings account of each person gainfully employed is \$695.50 in the five States ranking highest in school efficiency, \$89.25 in the five States ranking lowest. This item and the preceding statement are sufficient to show the relationship between education and wealth.
7. The history of Nations and States clearly shows that our richest resources are found in the will power, brain energy, and skill of the people. Our duty to the State and to the boys and girls requires the highest possible development of these human resources.

SUMMARY AND PROPOSED REMEDY

Thus far in our discussion we have submitted evidence to prove three propositions, namely:

- (a) That we do not have equality of educational opportunities in West Virginia.
- (b) That this equalization is a matter of taxation in West Virginia.
- (c) That the best interests of our youth and our State demand that educational opportunities be equalized.

We now come to the most important part of this brief discussion. It is useless to point out defects and needs unless we make a serious effort to correct the defects and to meet the need as far as conditions and resources will permit. In the outline and notes which follow, the main points of proposed legislation are set out: Carefully drawn bills containing these propositions in legal form will be submitted to the Legislature for its consideration.

IV. THE EQUALIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND SCHOOL TAXES BY THE REORGANIZATION OF OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM

The following outline of recommendations proposes corrections and additions in our school law that will secure in a large degree the ends desired without unduly disturbing the present organization and the functions of school units now existing:

1. Create a distributable state school fund of approximately one-third to one-half of teachers' fund and maintenance fund.

- (a) This state school fund is to be distributed to all districts on a formula which include the following items:
 - 1. Number of elementary pupils in average daily attendance.
 - 2. Number of elementary teachers required to meet the needs of the district.
 - (b) In States such as Texas, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and California, having progressive school systems, there is a distinct tendency toward a larger participation in school finances on the part of the State.
 - (c) The present industrial conditions suggest larger units of taxation since many leading industries gather their wealth from many parts of the State and distribute their services without regard to district or county lines.
 - (d) A study of census tables will prove that a large percentage of the population of the more prosperous communities is made up from people educated in some other center. It is erroneous and dangerous for a favored community to assume that it is sufficient to educate its own boys and girls.
 - (e) It is unfair for communities made prosperous by the natural resources of the State to refuse to share their prosperity with other less fortunate communities of the same State.
 - (f) President Coolidge states the case clearly in the following paragraph:

“The encouragement and support of education is peculiarly the function of the several States. While the political units of the district, township and county should not fail to make whatever contributions they are able, nevertheless, since the wealth and resources of different communities vary, while the needs of youth for education in the rich city and in the poor country are exactly the same, and the obligations of society towards them are exactly the same, it is proper that the State Treasury should be called on to supply the needed deficiency. The State must contribute, set the standard and provide supervision if society is to discharge its full duty not only to the use of the country, but even to itself.”
 - (g) It will be noted that upon the distribution is to be based partly upon attendance thus creating an incentive for better attendance; and upon the number of teachers required in order to make it necessary and possible for the State authorities to scrutinize more fully the actual number of teachers required in the different school units.
- 2. State Aid to county of low valuation should be provided and distributed according to present law.
 - (a) If possible further safeguard should be provided to insure special State aid to districts that are relatively needy.
 - (b) The general State, county and district funds should be provided so as to make it unnecessary to increase the present appropriation for special State aid.
 - 3. A county board of education (at present consisting of the presidents of the district boards).
 - (a) Authorized to consolidate the budgets of district boards of education into a county school budget.

- (b) To levy for the teachers fund to meet the necessary expenses of all of the schools of the county at minimum standards.

Note: Some of the advantages resulting from the provision of a County Board of Education with duties as here indicated, will be pointed out in later paragraphs.

- 4. The district board of education to continue as now provided.
 - (a) To have general charge of the school affairs of the district.
 - (b) To submit to the county board of education the district school budget.
 - (c) To employ teachers and district supervisors.
 - (d) To be authorized, but not required to lay a small levy to improve on minimum standards and to provide for supervision.

The first and chief duty of the proposed county board of education would be the consolidation of district school budgets into a county school budget as a basis for laying a county school levy to guarantee the minimum standards of school service throughout the county. We have already noted the inequalities of wealth in eleven adjoining districts. There can be no sound reason why the location of a railroad, coal mines, oil and gas wells, or industrial centers in a small district should give it the privilege of drawing about itself an imaginary line to cut off its share of burden and interest in the education of the boys and girls of the whole county.

While our chief interest at this time is in the financial phases of the school problem we respectfully urge our Legislature to give serious thought to the improvement of the supervision of our schools. It has been demonstrated that in big business and government undertakings expert supervision is a source of true economy.

The rate of salary now paid to county superintendents by the State is not high enough to attract to this important service highly trained school men and women. Some way should be devised whereby the State could pay a salary commensurate with the qualifications and experience of the superintendents.

FINAL SUMMARY OF MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. The Equalization of Educational Opportunities.
- II. The Equalization of School Taxes.
- III. A Larger Part of School Expenses to be Paid by the State.
- IV. The County as the Unit of School Support to the extent of the minimum school.
- V. The Continuation of the District as a Local Unit of School Organization.

A NEW HISTORY OF EDUCATION FOR WEST VIRGINIA

J. H. Hickman, formerly Assistant State Superintendent of Schools and now head of the school system at Hinton, West Virginia, has almost completed an unusually interesting volume on history of education in West Virginia.

He has brought together much source material not heretofore available and has prepared authentic accounts of each phase of our educational system from the beginning down to the present. This up-to-date history will appear as a second volume of the report of the State Superintendent of Free Schools early in 1927.

SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES—SCHOOL FUNDS

Year Ending June 30, 1926.

TEACHERS FUND—RECEIPTS

	Elementary	High School
Balance from Last Year.....	752,879.39	486,577.10
Amount from Levy.....	8,871,995.13	4,502,747.03
Supplemental Aid	1,776,881.00	14,538.00
Delinquent Lands	202,005.33	63,267.28
Tuition of Transferred Pupils.....	76,234.98	167,495.56
Miscellaneous	111,515.59	64,642.91
Total Receipts.....	\$11,791,511.42	\$5,299,267.88

TEACHERS' FUND DISBURSEMENTS

	Elementary	High School	Total
To Town & City Superintendents.....	79,236.48	86,031.00	
Dist. Supt. & Supervising Prins.....	204,238.00	315,613.99	
Supervisors of Instruction.....	54,623.72	71,386.36	
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Total Cost of Administration & Supervision.....	9,938,856.40	3,934,719.51	473,031.35
Teachers Salaries (a. White.....	777,673.31	96,321.78	4,031,041.29
(b. Colored.....			
Coupons of Credit (a. White.....	113,987.46	15,551.66	15,935.66
(b. Colored.....	3,515.25	384.00	
Institute Attendance (a. White.....	109,099.35	20,783.14	21,406.39
(b. Colored.....	3,719.56	623.25	
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Tuition & Transfer of Pupils.....	52,810.90		240,254.50
Miscellaneous.....	46,495.76		21,740.63
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Total Disbursements.....	11,383,756.19	4,803,409.82	495,858.06
Balance on Hand.....	407,755.23		5,299,267.88
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	11,791,511.42		

MAINTENANCE FUNDS

Year Ending June 30, 1926.

RECEIPTS

	Elementary
23. Balance from Last Year.....	443,509.17
24. Net Amt. from Levy.....	2,564,513.55
25. Supplemental Aid	76,106.96
26. Delinquent Lands	70,764.03
27. Sale of School Property.....	41,986.08
28. Miscellaneous	96,374.53

	High School
	224,487.82
	1,425,195.50
	314.35
	22,362.27
	10,750.18
	96,371.37

DISBURSEMENTS

	Elementary	High School
30. Redemption of Bonds.....	81,647.15	17,012.61
31. For Rent	22,995.58	4,544.24
32. For Repairs	357,334.51	199,618.56
33. Fuel, Water & Light.....	612,726.41	241,176.38
34. Janitor Service & Supplies..	642,557.56	301,477.34
35. Freight & Hauling.....	44,697.67	3,181.42
36. Transportation of Pupils.....	93,817.42	123,374.87
37. Secy's Stationery & Sup.....	53,138.93	2,086.04
38. For Insurance	123,078.68	93,150.95
39. Medical Inspection, etc.....	64,356.79	9,454.54
40. Attendance Officers	75,020.12	3,612.63
41. Salaries of Boards & Sectys.	119,860.95	8,372.26
42. Text Books	112,988.39	78,556.96
43. Apparatus & Equipment.....	217,122.81	296,913.86
44. Miscellaneous	203,688.12	173,741.86

45. Total Disbursements	2,825,033.09	1,556,274.02
46. Balance on Hands.....	468,221.23	223,207.47

29. Total Receipts	3,293,254.32	1,779,481.49
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	3,293,254.32	1,779,481.49
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NEW BUILDING FUND

Year Ending June 30, 1926.

RECEIPTS

47. Balance Last Year.....	1,353,347.13
49. Net Levy on Property.....	3,243,583.06
50. Sale of Property, etc.....	1,115,684.91
51. Miscellaneous	244,541.96
52. Total Receipts	<u>5,957,157.06</u>

DISBURSEMENTS

53. For Land	202,590.29
54. For Houses	2,949,537.55
55. For Furniture	345,182.72
56. For Apparatus	413,243.05
57. Rent & Repairs	646,358.06
58. Insurance	39,305.48
59. Miscellaneous	214,800.56
60. Total Disbursements	<u>4,811,017.71</u>
61. Balance on Hand.....	<u>1,146,139.35</u>

