

APPENDIX

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Here, for the first time, a great state, situated in the centre of a mighty Union, possessing exhausted resources of agricultural and mineral wealth, binding together its various parts by a network of rail roads, demands a development of and moral power of its people, a system can only result.

# REPORT

OF THE

## COMMISSIONERS OF REVISION OF THE SCHOOL LAWS.

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The undersigned, two of the commissioners appointed to revise the school laws of Iowa, under the act of the General Assembly passed July 14th, 1856, beg leave to report,

That they deeply regret the inability of the other commissioner, Mr. Bissell, to render his services in aid of their important enterprise. They were relying upon him to furnish them with that local knowledge so essential to all just and wise legislation. As his absence has entirely deprived them of this benefit, the General Assembly must perceive that the want of it must render their labors, to some extent, imperfect.

In undertaking the task assigned them in pursuance of this act, they have been fully aware, both of the difficulties in the way of its successful accomplishment, and of the vastly important results that await its proper performance. They found the previous legislation of this State upon this great subject, in the main, judicious in its provisions, but fragmentary in its character, lacking in general aims, and entirely wanting in unity or completeness.

In consulting the experience of other States upon this subject, they found a multitude of provisions; many of them analagous in character; some of them peculiar, based upon states and conditions of things not elsewhere existing; and all of them the gradual growths of time and necessity; the creation of exigencies that might themselves have ceased; and developed under influences that may have been temporary in their exercise.

Here, for the first time, a great State, situated in the centre of a mighty Union, possessing exhaustless resources of agricultural and mineral wealth, binding together its various parts by a net-work of iron, demands a system of public instruction adequate to the full development of its great physical resources, and of the intellect and moral power of its people. Such a system can only result from organization so perfectly constituted as never to conflict with each other; so harmonious in action as ever to furnish mutual aids; and so entire and complete as that one spirit shall pervade the whole. For the perfecting of such a system, your commissioners have found no adequate guides, in the experience of other States. They have, therefore, been compelled in many instances to rely upon their own sense of what provisions would prove sound and beneficial, when submitted to the touch-stone of practice.

The results of their labors are embodied in the act, or acts, herewith presented. They desire here simply to state a few of the principles upon which they have proceeded, and of the reasons by which they have been guided and governed.

These principles have been four in number.

1. That every youth in Iowa is entitled to receive an education in the elements of knowledge; that every one desiring it is entitled to have facilities afforded for a further progress; and that those originally endowed with large capacities should be stimulated to improve them by the cheering prospect of having their education furnished as a reward of their merit, scholarship, and good behavior, provided the State might thereafter secure to itself the benefit of their services.

2. That education, to be successful, must become a distinct and separate pursuit and business, having its own laws and principles; its own means and agencies; its own pervading spirit. That the human mind, although a living, spiritual organization, possessing inherent active tendencies, requires, nevertheless, to be tutored and trained in accordance with method and system, to produce the full and complete development of all its powers and capacities.

3. That as property, material wealth, owes its existence to mind, it ought, in return, to furnish adequate means by which the intellect and moral power of the State can be brought out and developed in all their varieties of application.

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4. that to complete a perfect system of education, three elements are necessary. These are the organizing, the financial, and the educational. The first two mentioned are only important as they affect the last, and the first is wholly expended in the advancement of the other two.

In regard to the financial department, the commissioners have been desirous of making a liberal provision for adequate common school instruction; and also to supply the growing wants for high Academic or Polytechnic schools to meet the demands of the future. They have devolved upon the taxable property of the district the duty of furnishing school houses; of properly equipping them; of finding them in fuel; and of founding and sustaining district libraries; and of providing necessary apparatus. They have created a motive in the inhabitants of the district to do this, by subjecting their property to a county tax, and rendering their participation in it conditioned upon their having a school kept, and the proper returns made.

They have devolved upon the taxable property of the county the duty of raising, for common school purposes, the same amount as that portion of the public school money which it receives by apportionment of the county superintendent. In doing this, they have only adopted the same principle as that which for almost forty years was acted upon by the State of New York, and under which the school system of that State has mainly grown up to its present state of prosperity. It was only abandoned in that State, when a more onerous system of taxation for school purposes was required and substituted for it; while, in the State of Iowa, if a rigid economy is exercised, and the unsold lands judiciously managed in regard to their sales, it may well be doubted whether such onerous system will ever be rendered necessary.

Your commissioners cannot regard any system of public instruction as complete, without some liberal provision for institutions of learning higher than the primary school, where the simplest elements of knowledge only are taught. They have accordingly made a provision for a high, Academic, or Polytechnic School, as soon as the population of a county reaches the number of 20,000. This they have made a part of the common school system, being well satisfied that under that system, these higher institutions will



tered in one individual, the county superintendent, subject to some slight modifications by the superintendent of public instruction, all the actual power exercised for school purposes, over the whole county. He unites the financial and visitorial power, and stands intermediate between the State and district organizations.

The commissioners have devolved upon the county superintendent the duty of attending to all the school lands in his county, as well the sixteenth sections in each township, as such portions of the five hundred thousand acres as may be located within its limits. These officers are far better situated to attend to the school lands within their own counties than the superintendent of public instruction. By thus dividing the responsibility among the various county superintendents, and placing it upon those favorably situated for undertaking it, the commissioners feel confident they have secured a greater degree of attention, and a less liability to loss. The county superintendants in this system are important officers, and in those counties in which large portions of the five hundred thousand acres, or investments from their sales, are situated, they should be remunerated beyond the amount of their salary.

Your commissioners could not deem the educational system of any state complete without a liberal provision for Teachers Institutes. This feature gives to the systems of Massachusetts and New York a decided superiority over those of other States, and from its highly beneficial effects as there displayed, every new State should be admonished of the propriety, nay, necessity of its adoption. The provisions they have made for that purpose does not, however, contemplate their immediate organization. It is prospective, and only become operative when the wants, demands, and necessities of education shall require it. The movement must first proceed from the teachers. They must bear their own expenses. Those incidentally incurred, for room, lights, fuel, &c., as also those for instruction, are to be borne by the State. The Legislature can, if they prefer, take the appropriation from the income of the common school fund, but the commissioners have deemed it a proper case for the State to furnish it from its own resources.

In the State of Massachusetts the places where these institutions are held have felt a sufficient interest in them to induce them to furnish gratuitously, board and accommodations to the teachers.

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the advice and recommendation of the State board of education, they have lodged the State supervision of the whole system. While his financial duties are less onerous than those of the county superintendents, every other is of a higher character, and demands for its performance the highest order of talent, attainments, and character.

The special organizations of the high Academic or Polytechnic school and the State University require no particular comment, except in their connection with the educational part of their system.

The entire system of public instruction which your commissioners here present, seeks the attainment of three leading objects.

The first, is to render as universal, and as perfect as possible, the system of elementary or common school instruction.

The second, is to offer facilities in higher institutions for a much more advanced style of culture.

The third, to animate every youthful mind, and encourage to effort by holding out this higher style of culture as a reward for good conduct, strict application, and scholar-like attainments.

To secure the first of these objects, they have endeavored so to arrange the financial element as to enable the several districts, by amply compensating for services, to command those of the best qualified teachers. No common school system can ever succeed, where the compensation is so meagre as to encourage only those of the most ordinary talents and attainments to embark in it. Although the teacher should have higher aims and objects than mere pecuniary recompense, yet it must be obvious that the grade of compensation is not only important as furnishing a means of living, but also as indicating the high or low estimate which a community places upon the character of the service. Although the commissioners have endeavored to secure competency by examination and certificate, yet they have more confidence in being able to obtain it through an appreciating community, evidenced by a remuneration corresponding with the real importance of the services rendered.

Another object which the commissioners have had in view, in forming this system, is to employ in its development the greatest possible number of individuals. This not only benefits by securing

the services, but also enlists the sympathies and active co-operation of those employed, and confers upon education itself the additional advantage of exalting it in the estimation of the community. They have accordingly provided for several honorary employments, such as presidents of district boards of directors, and various committees of examination, by which they hope to secure the services of such high-minded intelligent men, as are willing to seek their reward in the grateful feelings of a community whose higher interests they are thus unselfishly advancing.

Another consideration which has demanded a large share of the attention of your Commissioners is the efficient organization of the visatorial power. To establish a District School, and allow it to pursue its solitary course unnoticed and unknown, its merits unacknowledged, its defects unexposed, is very little better than having none at all; thus situated it will simply vegetate. It can live only in the approving smile and the favorable regard of men. They have, therefore, rendered the frequent exercise of the visatorial power a matter of duty. This will necessarily tend to make the District School known, to proclaim its merits, and to expose and cure its defects.

Your Commissioners have also been largely influenced by the convictions derived from their own experience. That the cause of education is best promoted by affording those interested in it frequent opportunities of meeting together; of comparing their observed facts, and discussing the principles involved in them, as well as all other matters relating to the general subject. From this careful collection of facts, and free interchange of thoughts, in the reasonings to which they give rise, have often been evolved new plans, methods, and arrangements, which have been greatly promotive of educational interests. With this view your Commissioners have rendered it the duty of the several superintendents, and the presidents of district boards of directors, in their respective counties, to meet once in each year in council, providing also that the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall be present at as many of these meetings as possible. They have also required a similar meeting to be had each year between the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the several county superintendents, and

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also between the members of the State Board of Education.—  
These provisions are, most of them, new, and the Commissioners  
anticipate good from their adoption.

Your Commissioners will allude but to one additional feature of  
the act submitted: that relative to the free scholarships subject to  
the obligations to teach, established by it in the State University.  
This is not, to their knowledge, embodied, in all its details, in any  
other system of public instruction. In fact no other State possesses  
a University so organized as to admit of it in the manner here pro-  
vided. Its rejection of college classes; its adoption of independ-  
ent departments; its rendering classical attainments unnecessary  
to secure an entrance into several of these last mentioned, opens  
the doors of the University, in respect to these departments, to a  
large class of young men, who desire to fit themselves for the com-  
mon pursuits of life, to whom the college must remain entirely  
closed. Your Commissioners have availed themselves of this plan  
of organization, and made use of it as a means of elevating the  
condition of the primary schools of the State. They desire to ex-  
cite everywhere among the young a noble ambition to be service-  
able to the State and their fellow men; an honest and faithful en-  
deavor to earn, by good conduct, and scholarly attainments, the  
proud distinction of being prepared for the State University. They  
desire to make the highest education—not free, because then it is  
too apt to be valued at its cost—but a privilege to be purchased.  
And this privilege is not purchasable with money, but with head  
and heart labor—a labor which, while it gives knowledge, confers  
a far richer boon—the power of making still higher and loftier at-  
tainments. They desire to send into every family of Iowa now,  
and through all future time, a spirit-stirring impulse, an animating  
principle, which shall penetrate the depths of every young heart,  
and arouse the latent energies of every young spirit, and thus car-  
ry forward the common school system into the fullest and comple-  
test realization of its glorious mission. They submit that the young  
State of Iowa owes it to herself, after having rejected the clog of  
human servitude, and banished the evils of intemperance, to adopt  
such an educational system as will develope in harmonious propor-  
tions, and push to their extremest limits, both the intellect and the  
moral power of each coming generation.



## APPENDIX.

Your Commissioners now feel that their task is ended. In the spirit of their recommendation to enlist in this great cause the unpaid services of others, they beg to present this result of their labors free of all charge, except for necessary expenses. It only remains for them to await, with no small solicitude, that legislative action upon which, in their judgment, hang such important consequences for the future.

HORACE MANN,  
AMOS DEAN,  
Commissioners.

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