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[OFFICIAL.]

Circular to Local Superintendents of Common Schools on the mode of distributing the School Fund among the several School Sections for the year 1851.

SIR,—I address this Circular to you on the subject of distributing the school fund for the present year among the several school sections placed under your charge. The first clause of the 31st section of the school act requires each local superintendent, "as soon as he shall have received from the county clerk a notification of the amount of money apportioned to the township or townships within the limits of his charge, to apportion the same, (unless otherwise instructed by the Chief Superintendent of Schools,) among the several school sections entitled to receive it, according to the average attendance of pupils attending each common school, (the mean attendance of pupils for both winter and summer being taken,) as compared with the whole average number of pupils attending the common schools of such township."

It is clear from the clause of the Act thus quoted, that if no instructions be given by the Chief Superintendent of Schools on the apportionment of the school money by local superintendents, the average attendance of pupils must be the basis of such apportionment. The power given to the Chief Superintendent as to the basis of apportioning the money to the several school sections under your charge, was designed merely to prevent the introduction of the new principle of apportionment without proper notice and against the wishes of any county. I have no desire or interest on the subject, except that which will be most acceptable to the people at large and most conducive to the education of their children. The principle of aiding those who help themselves, and in proportion as they do so, appears the most equitable, and best calculated to call forth local effort, to keep the schools open both summer and winter, and to secure the largest and most regular attendance of pupils. But at the same time, all parties concerned ought to have a year's notice that the amount of school money to be apportioned to them the following year would depend upon their exertions, and not upon the accidental circumstance of the number of children of school age resident in their section. In order, however, to render the administration of the law on this point harmonious with the wishes of the people, the several County Councils have been consulted; and I have received replies from most of them. The purport of the greater part of the replies is in favor of apportioning the school money to each section the current year according to the ratio of school population, and not of school attendance; in some of the replies no wish is expressed on the subject; and in one or two instances, County Councils have expressed a wish to have the moneys apportioned upon the basis of last year's attendance, as contemplated by the letter of the law.

The following Municipal Councils have expressed a wish that the basis of the distribution of the school fund for 1851, should be that of school population, as reported for 1850, viz:—

1. The County of Norfolk.
2. The United Counties of Northumberland and Durham.
3. The United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry.
4. The United Counties of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington.
5. The County of Peterborough.
6. The United Counties of Essex and Lambton.
7. The County of Prince Edward.
8. The County of Carleton.

The following have expressed a wish that the distribution of the school fund for 1851 be according to the average attendance of pupils as contemplated in the 1st clause of the 31st section of the School Act, viz:—

1. The United Counties of Huron, Perth and Bruce.
2. The County of Middlesex.

The remaining Counties have either expressed no opinion at all, or else have not yet transmitted their opinion on the subject to the Education Office.

With the wishes thus expressed it is my desire to comply. I have therefore to request, that in all cases where your County Council has either expressed no opinion on the subject, or has expressed a desire that the former method of apportioning the school money the current year should be continued, you will apportion the same according to the ratio of children between the ages of five and sixteen years resident in each school section as compared with the whole number of children of school age in the Township. But if your County Council has expressed a wish that practical effect should be given to the new provision of the law on this subject, you will then apportion the school money to the several sections under your charge according to the average attendance of pupils during the past year "the mean attendance for both winter and summer being taken."

Two questions have been proposed to me by several local Superintendents, as to the basis of apportioning the school money to the several school sections. The first is, whether a school section in which the school is kept open only six months is entitled to an apportionment equal in amount to another section with the same number of pupils in which the school is kept open nine or twelve months? I answer, that the law having prohibited the payment of school moneys in aid of any section in which a school shall not have been kept open six months during the preceeding year by a legally qualified teacher, the period of six months has been regarded as the minimum of a school year. Yet as the law does not require the local superintendent to pay to the orders of the trustees of a school section in which a school may have been kept open six months *all* that may have been apportioned to such section for the year, there is room to consider the question as to whether two sections equal in school population should receive an equal amount of aid from the school fund, though in the one the school should be kept open only six months during the year, and in the other twelve. Thus far, each section in which a school has been kept open six months during the year by a qualified teacher, has received the full amount of the apportionment for such year. That course I think should not be departed from the current year. But the question involved may, I think, form a proper topic of remark and consultation at the county school conventions, which I hope to be able to attend during the ensuing autumn throughout Upper Canada.

The second question which has been proposed by several local superintendents, relates to the mode of apportionment where the average attendance of pupils, and not school population, is made the basis of apportionment to the several school sections of a township. To ascertain the average attendance of pupils at a school for a given period, involves no difficulty; but I am asked, how the "mean attendance of winter and summer is to be obtained?" I answer, that in the directions which have accompanied the blank forms of trustees reports during the last 2 or 3 years, it is stated that "the term *summer* in the report is intended to include the half year commencing in April and ending in September, and the term *winter*, the half year commencing in October and ending in March;" or in other words, the *summer* part of the school year commences in the *spring*, and the *winter* part in the *autumn*. Should the "average winter attendance" of pupils in a school section be 50, and should there be no school in such section during the summer, the "mean attendance of pupils in winter and summer" in such section would be 25; but should there be a school in such section during the summer, and the average attendance be 40, then the mean attendance of 50 in the winter and 40 in the summer, would be 45.

These remarks on the modes of apportioning the school moneys, will I hope be sufficient to guide you in performing this part of your duty the current year. In the contemplated school conventions next autumn, we will confer on this as well as on other important subjects connected with the working of our school system.

I have the honor be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant

E. RYERSON.

EDUCATION OFFICE,
Toronto, 28th June, 1851.