



# JOURNAL OF EDUCATION.

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## EDUCATION.

### Health of School Children.

The Medical Society of Middlesex county, Mass., having considered for several successive meetings the influence of public schools on the health of children, has authorized the publication of the following maxims as the deliberate opinions of its members:

1st. No child should be allowed to attend school before the beginning of its sixth year.

2d. The duration of daily attendance (including the time given to recess and physical exercise) should not exceed four and a half hours for the Primary schools, six hours for the other schools.

3d. There should be no study required out of school,—unless at High Schools; and this should not exceed one hour.

4th. Recess time should be devoted to play outside the school-room—unless during very stormy weather—and as this time rightly belongs to the pupils, they should not be deprived of it except for some serious offence; and those who are not deprived of it should not be allowed to spend it in study; and no child should ever be confined to the school-room during an entire session. The minimum of recess-time should be fifteen minutes in each session, and in Primary schools there should be more than one recess in each session.

5th. Physical exercise should be used in school to prevent nervous and muscular fatigue and to relieve monotony, but not as *muscular training*. It should be practiced by both teachers and children for at least *five minutes* in every hour not broken by recess, and should be timed by music. In Primary schools every half-hour should be broken by exercise, recess or singing.

6th. Ventilation should be amply provided for by *other means than open windows*, though these should be used in addition to the special means, during recess and exercise time.

7th. Lessons should be scrupulously apportioned to the average capacity of the pupils; and in Primary schools the slate should be used more and the books less, and instruction should be given as much as possible on the principles of "Object Teaching."

We heartily accept each of these maxims, the third excepted, and we can endorse that if first permitted to explain our vote—speaking after the manner of Congressmen. The reason assigned for this maxim by the learned physicians who adopt it, is, that adult scholars can not bear more than seven hours of study, and that it is folly to suppose that immature minds in *growing* bodies can endure more. Now, as a matter of fact, the pupils in most of our schools do not study *three* hours a day—in many of our lower schools not to exceed *one* hour is given to actual study. The daily session of six hours is reduced by recesses and opening and closing exercises to about five hours; and even in our Grammar schools full one-half of this time is devoted to recitations and other exercises which afford a degree of mental and bodily relief. The fact that the schools are in session but five days each week, is also to be considered. If the other six maxims laid down by the Middlesex physicians are faithfully observed, we do not see why a moderate amount of home study need be injurious to pupils who are twelve years of age and upwards. If, on the contrary, children breathe poison during the day and have neither physical exercise nor out-door plays, and consequently return home from school brain-weary, nervous, and possibly, afflicted with headache, no home-study should be required.

It is the manner and conditions of study, rather than study itself, that injures health. The testimony of statistics is conclusive, that proper study is conducive to health and longevity. The duration of life among scholars and literary men, notwithstanding their general neglect of out-door exercise, is greater than among those not addicted to brain-work. Indeed it stands to reason, that as the body of man was made for the indwelling of an intelligent, rational soul, the development of that soul by study