

Of very great importance is it to know the exact condition of a school and of every department and class in it. By a judicious use of statistics from week to week and from quarter to quarter, the attendance, work, giving and spirit of a school may be improved in a marked degree. The grade or class, even the individual most negligent of duty, may be ascertained and quickened.

Where facts are not known and used in this way a school must sink in ambition, work and spirit, while a full recognition of effort and merit is a great stimulus to higher merit and effort.

Though the superintendent and officers have and use such exact information in and for the good of the school it should not stop here. Parents should be put in possession of exact information respecting the condition of the whole school, but especially respecting their own children—their attendance, deportment, work, giving, etc.

Let no one object that this would be bringing our schools to the level of secular schools. If the work of secular schools is more efficiently carried out that is but a contrast which puts our Sabbath teaching and work to shame. To adopt means of efficiency, so long as they have no tendency to secularize, is highly creditable from whatever source they may be obtained. But to inform Christian parents of the work and progress of their children in Sabbath school by interview or written report, or both, is the Christian duty of every teacher; and most parents will welcome such information as an excellent means of cooperation between the home and the school.

In addition to the value of exact and full registration of school statistics in and for the school and home, such registration is necessary that Presbyteries, Synods and Assembly may deal with Sabbath schools as their importance demands. Though careful and exact registration has been enjoined for years and forms for that purpose have been sent out, the returns have been shamefully imperfect and vague in not a few cases. Thus, to a large extent, the hands of the Courts have been tied by the indifference of officers and teachers who failed to keep records as required by the Church. Matters are improving—fuller and more reliable statistics are coming in year by year. But why every school should not keep its records as is obviously best for the school and also for general purposes seems unaccountable, except on the supposition that the matter has not been made sufficiently prominent. Pastors and superintendents should give special attention to registration till it is perfect.

Let there be a full record of name, age and residence of every scholar. For each day record—Attendance at school and church, verses memorized, questions in Catechism memorized, proofs of doctrine given from memor. and amount of offering. An exact summary of these should be made and recorded each quarter and announced in the school. Then at the end of the year the secretary could place full and reliable information in the hands of all to whom he should report.

An excellent incentive to future regularity and good work would be found in the use of a neat motto card for the coming year, having on the back a space for the name of the scholar, his attendance, his verses, questions in Catechism and proofs memorized during the year just closed, and any other item specially deserving acknowledgment.

The labour involved in such registration and reporting, though considerable, will be fruitful as a means of efficiency in every department.

TEACHING.

Teachers should study their art.—What teaching is not.—What it is.—What learning is.—No learning, no teaching.—The most successful.—Conditions of success.—“The approach.”—Results assured by Him who cannot lie.

To be successful as teachers we need to have some adequate understanding of what is involved in teaching; and with that knowledge we need experience in the practice of its duties. Many Sabbath school teachers would do far more successful work were they to read some book on the art of teaching simply to understand some of the leading principles underlying the work they are attempting to do in the dark.

Preaching is different in method from teaching. Lecturing or telling is not teaching. Hearing recitations is not teaching. Following a text book with question and answer is not teaching.

To teach is so to arouse the faculties of the scholars that they lay hold of and assimilate the truth presented to them. In the highest kind of learning the learner sees the truth clearly and so lays hold of it that it becomes a part of his mental and moral equipment, and then he reduces it to practice in his life.

If this be true, strictly speaking, there can be no real teaching where there is no real learning; and there is no learning except through the self-activity of the learner.

The most successful teacher is, therefore, the one who is most skillful in arousing, directing, and keeping up the self-activity of his scholars.

To be successful in this fullest sense a teacher must know clearly the truth he wishes to be learned. He must know his scholars, their character, capacity and surroundings. He must be skillful in adopting the best way of presenting a truth. And he must know how to arouse and sustain hearty cooperation on the part of his scholars.

Success in teaching depends greatly upon the approach of the teacher to his class and lesson. If he fall in his approach there is a probability of failure throughout. There should, therefore, be skillful preparation and watchful ingenuity in the matter of the first word, look, question, attitude, gesture. All eyes, ears and minds should, if possible, be arrested and held from the beginning.

Aiming always at the highest standard, and following closely the example, and seeking constantly the presence and promised help of Him who gives the commission, let no teacher despair even in the hour of greatest discouragement, “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”