



Union of Towns for the Purpose of Employing Superintendent of Schools (Classic Reprint)

Maine; Office of State Commis Education

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Excerpt from Union of Towns for the Purpose of Employing Superintendent of Schools

The legislature at the session of 1897 passed a law authorizing towns to unite for the purpose of employing a superintendent of schools, who shall devote his entire time to the work of superintendence. This law is explained in detail in the accompanying circular and it is hoped this explanation will be carefully read by all persons who have an interest in the improvement of our public schools.

The distinguishing feature of successful industrial enterprises of the present time is that the work is carried on under the direction of trained superintendents. Business men have learned that it is for their financial interest to have their workmen perform their labors under the direction of experts. It has been demonstrated that the money devoted to this service makes the entire investment more remunerative. What has thus been found true of industrial and business enterprises is equally, if not in larger measure, true of school systems.

The law referred to above provides that one-half the amount expended for superintendents' salaries shall be paid by the State. It also provides that the person elected to serve as superintendent shall be a person of such education and training as will fit him to direct the teaching in the schools under his charge. This is especially important because for some years many of the teachers in the public schools must be persons who have had but little experience as instructors and who are deficient in professional training. These two facts account for the large number of failures which the local superintendents report from year to year. Many of the persons who serve as teachers have not attended a secondary school more than one or two terms and have never attended a training or normal school. They enter upon their labors so poorly equipped that failure for one or more terms is the rule rather than the exception. They experiment at the expense of the State and the local communities and, in a still more serious way, with the time and lives of the children. Some of them continue to be failures and some learn by experience and develop into efficient instructors. Much of the waste along these two important lines might be saved if competent superintendents visited the schools taught by these untrained persons, indicated to them definitely wherein they were making mistakes and what changes they should institute in their methods and suggested to them ways and means, plans and devices by which they could improve their work.

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