

CLEVELAND EDUCATION SURVEY

**CHILD ACCOUNTING
IN THE PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

**BY
LEONARD P. AYRES**



**THE SURVEY COMMITTEE OF THE
CLEVELAND FOUNDATION
CLEVELAND • OHIO**

**CHILD ACCOUNTING IN THE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

THE SURVEY COMMITTEE OF THE CLEVELAND FOUNDATION

Charles E. Adams, Chairman
Thomas G. Fitzsimons
Myrta L. Jones
Bascom Little
Victor W. Sincere

Arthur D. Baldwin, Secretary
James R. Garfield, Counsel
Allen T. Burns, Director

THE EDUCATION SURVEY

Leonard P. Ayres, Director

CLEVELAND EDUCATION SURVEY

**CHILD ACCOUNTING
IN THE PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

BY

LEONARD P. AYRES



**THE SURVEY COMMITTEE OF THE
CLEVELAND FOUNDATION
CLEVELAND • OHIO**

COPYRIGHT, 1915, BY
THE SURVEY COMMITTEE OF THE
CLEVELAND FOUNDATION

Printed November, 1915, 1300 copies
Reprinted April, 1916, 1000 copies
Reprinted February, 1917, 1500 copies

WM·F·FELL CO·PRINTERS
PHILADELPHIA



FOREWORD

This book, entitled "Child Accounting in the Public Schools," is one of the 25 volumes comprising the report of the Cleveland Education Survey conducted by the Survey Committee of the Cleveland Foundation in 1915 and 1916. Twenty-three of these volumes are separate monograph reports. In addition there is a summary volume entitled "The Cleveland School Survey," telling of the conduct of the entire study and giving the findings and recommendations of the 15 monographs relating to the regular work of the public school. There is also a volume entitled "Wage Earning and Education" which gives a summary of the eight monographs relating to industrial education. Copies of all these publications may be obtained from the Cleveland Foundation. They may also be obtained from the Division of Education of the Russell Sage Foundation, New York City. A complete list will be found in the back of this volume, together with prices.

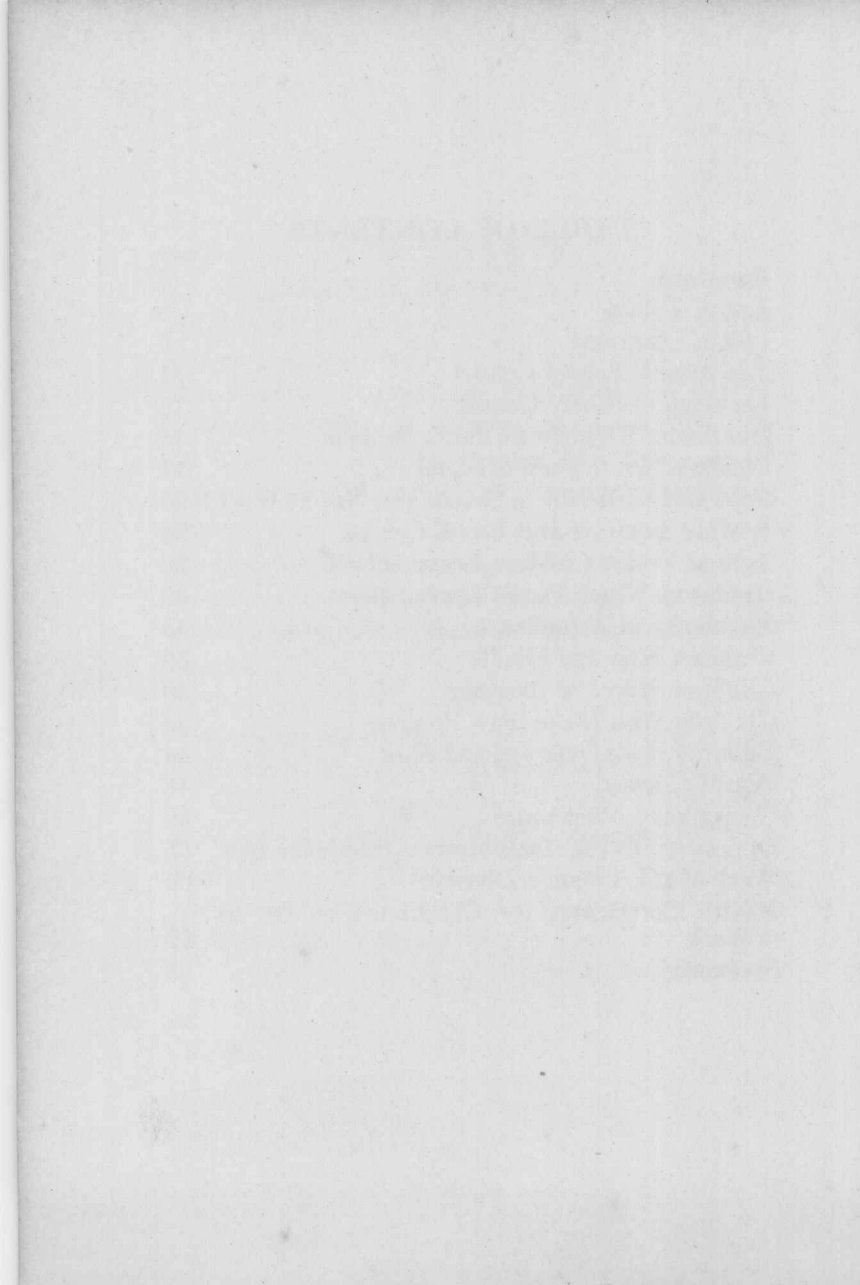


TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Foreword	5
List of Tables	8
List of Diagrams	9
The Annual School Census	11
Accuracy of School Census	13
Number of Children in Public Schools	15
Children Not in Public School	17
Boys and Girls Not in School and Not at Work	20
A More Accurate and Useful Census	22
Ages at Which Children Leave School	26
Grades at Which Pupils Leave School	30
Regularity of Attendance	35
Children Who Are Misfits	39
Children Who Are Over-age	40
Children Who Make Slow Progress	43
Children Both Over-age and Slow	44
Size of Classes	48
Compulsory Attendance	50
Opposition to the Compulsory Attendance Law	55
Work of the Truancy Division	60
Health Certificates for Children Who Go to Work	62
Summary	63

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Children of each age reported by the school census of May, 1915, and number enrolled in the public schools in June, 1915	18
2. Pupils enrolled in public elementary, high, and normal schools in June, 1915	27
3. Pupils enrolled in the different grades of the public day schools in June, 1915	31
4. Number of pupils among each hundred beginners dropping out of school at each age and grade	34
5. Age and progress classification of children in elementary schools at close of year 1914-15	44
6. Per cent of children in each elementary school who are both over-age for their grades and making slow progress	47
7. Attendance in 1,791 classrooms in March, 1915	49
8. Approximate grade distribution of the boys and girls who were in the public schools in June, 1915, through the working of the new compulsory education provisions	53

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

DIAGRAM	PAGE
1. School attendance of children enumerated by the school census	19
2. Boys and girls of each age in the public schools	27
3. Number of pupils remaining in school at each age	29
4. Number of pupils enrolled in each grade	32
5. Number of pupils remaining in school at each grade	33
6. Progress of 10 typical pupils through the school system	35
7. Regularity of school attendance	38
8. Per cent of children in each age and progress group	45

CHILD ACCOUNTING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Every year, in the month of May, Cleveland counts its children of school age (six to 21) and finds out which ones are attending public school, parochial school, private school, or no school. According to law, all children between the ages of eight and 15 should be in school, but nobody knows whether they are or not, because the returns of the yearly census are not tabulated so as to tell the essential facts about the children of any given age. For 1915, the returns tell us that there are about 171,000 children of school age in the district, that nearly 88,000 of them are in public schools, 34,000 in parochial and private schools, and more than 49,000 are not in any school. This last group is largely made up of those who are not of compulsory attendance age.

Each year after the census has been taken, the city reports to the state the number of children of school age who were enumerated, and receives about \$2.00 from state funds for each

one so reported. This is almost the only use made of the census returns.

The census reports 49,000 children of school age who are not in school, but the truant officer does not examine the returns to find out how many of them are of compulsory school age. The returns are not checked up with those of the Federal census to find out whether the school census has reported more or fewer children of school age than would normally be expected in such a city as this. The public schools record the number of children of each age attending them, but these figures are not compared with the school census figures. The school census returns are reported by districts and by wards, but the results are not used to find out which sections of the city are growing most rapidly and so may require new school buildings to accommodate the children.

The public schools exist for the purpose of providing education for all the children who do not attend elsewhere, and they are charged with the duty of seeing to it that every child of compulsory school age attends school somewhere. In order to discharge these duties, the school officials need to know how many children there are of each age in the district, who they are, where they are, and whether or not they are attending school. This information is essential

to meeting its duties efficiently and intelligently. At present the information is being gathered each year at large expense, but it is not being efficiently used nor are the figures so tabulated as to yield the important information that they contain.

ACCURACY OF SCHOOL CENSUS

A study of population statistics shows that in cities of the general social composition of Cleveland, the proportion of people in the population who are from six to 20 years of age is about 27 per cent of the entire population. Thus, according to the United States Census for 1910, the young people of these ages in the city of Chicago were 27.2 per cent of the entire population; in Cleveland they were 26.9 per cent; in Detroit 26.4 per cent; in Pittsburg 27.5 per cent; and in St. Louis 26.4 per cent. Corresponding figures for other cities and former censuses are closely similar. The ratio of children of these school ages to the entire population is a nearly constant ratio in cities of a similar sort.

In the year 1910, when the Federal Census was taken, there were in the city of Cleveland, according to the United States Census, 150,887 young people of from six to 20 years of age, of

whom approximately 147,800 were unmarried. In the same year the school census returned only 135,119. Thus the school census returned some 12,751 fewer unmarried children of these ages than did the Federal Census of the same year. For each subsequent year the Bureau of the Census at Washington has computed estimates of the population of Cleveland. Using these figures as a basis, we may compare the estimated number of unmarried children of school age for each subsequent year with the numbers returned by the annual school enumeration.

These comparisons show that the school enumeration has fallen short of the probable true number of unmarried children of these ages in the city by nearly 16,000 in 1911, over 20,000 in 1912, over 18,000 in 1913, more than 9,000 in 1914, and nearly 3,000 in 1915. The aggregate shortage for the six years is apparently about 79,000.

Since the schools of Cleveland receive each year from state funds approximately \$2.00 for each child enumerated, these indicated shortages are equivalent to serious financial losses amounting to more than \$150,000 in the past six years. The Board of Education has now taken steps directed to the improvement of the accuracy and completeness of the annual school census.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The school census enumerates the children in the city at each age from six to 21. Its tabulated returns also give the total number of children attending public schools, parochial schools, private schools, or no schools, at the time the census was taken, but they do not give these facts for the children of each age separately.

The returns for 1915 reported 87,760 children as attending the public schools during the third week in May. At the close of the school term the public schools compiled figures showing the ages of the children then enrolled in them and these figures are for the second week in June, or only two weeks later than the census figures. These public school figures showed that there were then enrolled 81,788 pupils, or nearly 6,000 fewer than the census has just reported as being in public schools. Here is a serious discrepancy. This is a difference of nearly 6,000 pupils which the census reported as attending public school and the public school did not report as being in attendance.

This discrepancy is probably to be accounted for in three ways. In the first place, some of the children reported by the census as being in public schools were probably six-year-old children enrolled in the public kindergartens. Since

the school records do not tell us the ages of kindergarten pupils, we cannot tell how many of them were six years old. It seems clear, however, that they cannot be very numerous and by no possibility could they account for any large proportion of this discrepancy.

A second and more important reason is probably based on the system of recording and reporting the enrollment of children in the Cleveland public schools. According to the system in use, a pupil who is absent for three consecutive days is dropped from the roll and no longer counted as belonging to that school. The fact that he is dropped from the roll does not, however, prevent his parent from reporting him as being in attendance at public school, and it is probable that this is just what happened in a large number of cases. It illustrates a seriously weak feature of the method used in counting enrollment in Cleveland. Almost the only object of dropping children from the roll after they have been absent for three days is to keep the enrollment down so that the attendance may always appear to be a high percentage of the enrollment and the school reports may make a creditable showing. That they never fail to do so is inherent in the method followed, for attendance must always be a high percentage of enrollment if it is so arranged that