

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL PROMOTIONS

A Statement from Parents of the Pupils in the Seventh Grade and One from Prof Golden -- The School Board's Decision

Editor Times:

An unfortunate misunderstanding having been created in the minds of some of the parents as to the recent promotions in the school, I deem it advisable to make the following explanation in the columns of your paper:

The promotions that were recently made are not the regular annual promotions, based on final examinations. They are simply extra promotions, made to equalize the various grades, and to permit the few in the several grades who have manifestly worked ahead of their grades, to be promoted to the next. These promotions are not governed by the rule under which the final examinations are conducted. That rule is as follows:

RULE 3, EXAMINATIONS.—Besides monthly written tests there shall be final examinations at the close of the school year to determine the promotion of pupils whose work has left doubt as to their fitness for "honorary promotion." These finals shall be given on a schedule furnished by the principal and shall commence the second Wednesday before the close of the school year.

Note particularly, this rule specifically refers to the examinations "at the close of the school year."

The rule under which these extraordinary promotions were made is as follows:

RULE 5, EXTRA PROMOTIONS.—Promotions may be made at other times by the principal in cases of marked advance beyond the grade."

It is naturally impossible to keep a class of forty or fifty boys and girls exactly together for a period of nine months, and it would be manifestly unjust to the exceptionally bright and industrious pupils who have worked ahead of their class to hold them back for the entire year. The purpose of this last rule is to meet these cases. It was under this rule that the recent promotions were made. The same practice has been in vogue for some time, and has worked satisfactorily. The conditions were explained to all the teachers beforehand, and were exactly complied with in all but one room, and only in this room has complaint arisen. In this room there were thirty-three to thirty-six pupils rated by the teacher for promotion. Most of these pupils had been out of the former grade only about four months, and anyone can easily see what would be the demoralizing effect of promoting this large number of pupils to a higher grade, at a time when this higher grade had completed over a half of the year's work. If there were no other reasons than the injury resulting to the promoted pupils themselves, as a result of attempting to take up the advanced year's work already half completed, and also the demoralization of those already in the higher grade caused by the accession of almost enough new pupils to start a new grade, the physical impossibility of crowding the number of pupils that would thus have been combined into one under the care of a single teacher, is justifiable reason for using the discretion conferred on the principal by the rules, in making these extra-ordinary promotions.

The principal is anxious, fully as much so as are parents, to build up the higher grade. Particularly is this the case now, when extra efforts are being made to get a good full, four year high school organized. He however, realizes, as should everyone, that a successful school can result only from thoroughness on the part of its pupils.

If individual injustice has been done any of the pupils as a result of the recent promotions this will be corrected as soon as it has been discovered.

Resp.
F. A. GOLDEN, Prin.

Card From School Board.

To the Editor:

After carefully considering all the facts in the case as set forth by Prof. Golden and the teacher of the Seventh Grade, the directors decided that action taken in limiting the number of promotions to the Eighth Grade was in the interests of both the pupils and the school; and while it would appear that an injustice had been done some of the pupils, we believe that the result will show that such is not the case.

We earnestly urge all friends of our school to refrain from hasty criticism of the action of the principal in this matter, and to rest assured

Editor Times: The accompanying article is not intended to open a long drawn out controversy, nor written for the purpose of "getting into print." What it covers appears to interested parties as rightly public property, and as such they believe its dissemination will do no harm.

The parents of twenty children attending the seventh grade of the Marshfield public school believe they have a grievance against the superintendent, Prof. Golden, and likewise against the board of education for its decision in the matter of hold-up promotions in that grade. Recently, examinations were held in the various grades of the grammar school. Prof. Golden, according to the evidence of teacher and pupils in the seventh grade, came into the room and announced the requirements each pupil would have to meet in order to pass into the eighth grade. These were an average of 80 per cent and no minimum below 70 per cent. Thirty-six pupils met these requirements. When the examinations were over and the results became known, the superintendent informed the pupils that none would be promoted who had not attained an average of 90 per cent or more.

Questions were immediately put to the superintendent and the excuse was given that there was not room for so many students in the next room. But such argument was assailable, for rooms and grades could be changed to accommodate a larger eighth grade. Consequently, a more tangible reason was demanded. Hints were then thrown out of "cribbing" having been practiced during the examinations.

Those who believed they had just cause of complaint said as much to the board of education and a meeting was set for Thursday afternoon and they were invited to be present and state their grievances. They went to that meeting and were requested to wait with patience in an outer room, while the meeting progressed in an inner room. These parents remained for an hour and a half and were then informed that the affair was settled; that the pupils in the seventh grade whose averages were below 90 per cent and above 80 per cent would not be promoted. They were not given a hearing.

This decision was reached after Prof. Golden declared that the examination papers were marked too high.

Plainly, and beyond any reasonable doubt, there has been discrimination against the seventh grade. The list of promotions published in Thursday evening's Times shows 80 per cent to have been sufficient in every other grade. There is no defensible reason for such discrimination, unless, as Prof. Golden claims, the papers have been marked too high, and then only where, on revision, they may be found to have fallen below requirements. There is no dispute as to the questions of the seventh grade examinations being applicable to the occasion, for they were approved by the superintendent. Those who passed the requirements laid down by the superintendent at the outset are as much entitled to promotion as any others in the school averaging above 80 per cent, providing their papers will show an average of 80 per cent and no minimum below 70 per cent. Those pupils who have been held up believe that their examination papers should be submitted to an impartial committee of three and the truth learned as to whether the markings are too high, and it is their right that such action be taken. It is an easy matter to say, as if the incident were closed: "The papers were marked too high," but it doesn't convince those most vitally interested that such is a fact.

Let us see how much a teacher would be obliged to boost the markings of some pupils who were plucked. Several had averages between 89 per cent and 90 per cent,

that the directors and principal have only the best interests of the school at heart and will use their utmost endeavors to see that no injustice be done anyone.

Respectfully,
J. T. McCormac,
W. B. Curtis,
Directors School District No. 9.

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a clear steal, we must believe, of at least nine credits on each study. Others were as low as 83 per cent, and it was necessary to give even these four credits to each study.

The result of this agitation is that the seventh grade is without a teacher, whether justly or unjustly, the public will learn. It remains a fact, however, that of late there has been earnest and studious endeavor on the part of seventh grade pupils. They were interested in their studies; they were making more than satisfactory progress and were anxious to pass the examinations and be duly promoted. There are those in the seventh grade who have spent a year in it, and likely, under existing circumstances, see themselves growing gray-haired in the same grade.

The matter of "cribbing" was passed over with a word, but it deserves more. Those of us who have passed through the public schools, the academies or the colleges know there was never an examination held where it was not practiced to some extent. Somebody gets information from somebody else. The teachers may be horrified. If so, then they do not see all which goes on about them during examinations. No, this is not a defense of the practice; only a cold truth. It cannot be successfully denied. It has always been with us and always will be. There are many pupils with a strict sense of honor who scorn assistance and would prefer failure in examinations. And there are those who would not impart the information sought. And then, there are others. It doesn't follow that teachers see these things and condone them. They are accomplished too expeditiously for the busy eye of the teacher to detect. And it is only just to say that every precaution is taken to prevent them. But they happen, notwithstanding.

Now the question arises: Shall twenty-three pupils suffer for the misdeeds of a few? The main contention, and the point of justice in this matter is this: the pupils who have averages above 80 per cent have a right to know if the papers are marked too high; if they are found to support the averages of 80 per cent and over, then there is no example or criterion in the present series of examinations to justify stifling their ambitions to move on.

Some, perhaps, will say this article would be received with more consideration if it came from a disinterested source. Perhaps so. But a three years' experience in Oregon has taught us that disinterested people find great satisfaction in passiveness, and those who have complaints must fight their own battles and be content with a smile for their pains.

But there is coming a time in Oregon when old things will be submerged, and it is not far distant.

Respectfully submitted,
O. W. BRIGGS.

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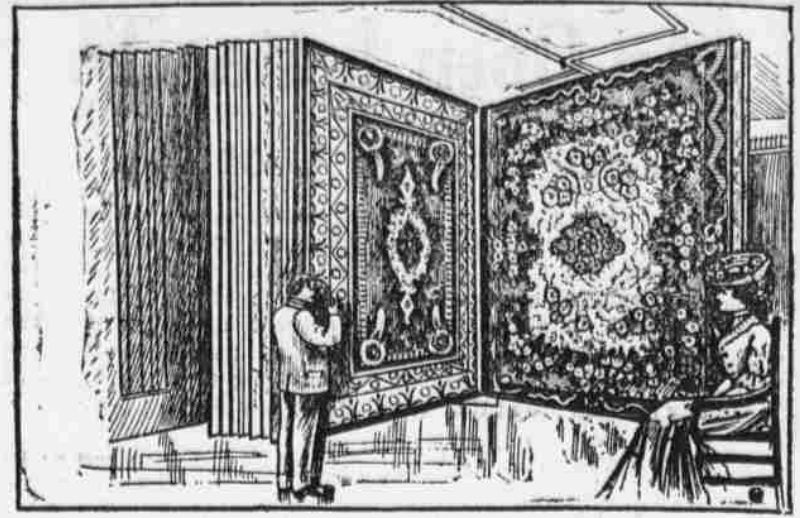
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