

10-29-1943

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Recommended Citation

Vandiver, J. S., "Some Facts Pertaining to our Schools in Wartime" (1943). *Mississippi Education Collection*. 82.
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10729/43
Mississippi - State Department
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Education

SOME FACTS PERTAINING TO OUR SCHOOLS IN WARTIME

By J. S. Vandiver
State Superintendent of Education

We are very proud of the loyalty and patriotism shown by our teachers in the development of the wartime program in Mississippi schools. Practically all of them have participated in some form of reorganization of their regular school programs to meet the rapidly changing needs of their communities. The schools almost as a unit have cooperated in salvage campaigns, bond and stamp sale drives. The F.F.A. and 4-H Clubs have gone forward with their "Food for Victory" program. Health and nutrition have been given added emphasis. Junior Red Cross organizations have taken on new impetus. The "Walk to School" movement initiated in many of our schools has received national recognition. Mississippi has led the nation in the number of illiterates prepared for military service and in the total enrollment in OSYA, and stands near the top in all wartime programs. The directors of these various wartime programs give to the schools much of the credit for these accomplishments.

During the 1942-43 session, Mississippi schools gave one or more forms of pre-induction training to 25,868 youngsters. It is estimated that 15,000 high school youths were enrolled in Victory Corps or similar wartime programs which were organized in 80 schools.

The vocational schools gave specialized training to 44,000 enrollees, of whom 95% were placed in employment. The OSYA program enrolled a total of 137,657.

The nationwide teacher shortage has been a critical wartime difficulty in Mississippi. Early efforts made by school leaders, colleges, and accrediting agencies prevented a complete break-down in the instructional staff of the public schools in the first years of the war. It is estimated that the \$2,000,000 authorized by Governor Johnson and budgeted by the State Board of Education kept at least 1,000 white teachers and many negro teachers in schoolrooms for the 1943-44 session, who would have accepted employment elsewhere. Had they deserted the classrooms, think of the tragedy in the lives of thousands of students left without schools.

STATE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MISSISSIPPI SCHOOLS

Regular Annual State Appropriation of the 1941-43 biennium	\$6,787,500
Special Appropriation for 1943-44 session authorized by the governor on poll of the legislature	2,000,000
Total State funds for 1943-44 session	8,787,500

Average salary of teachers for 1943-44 in equalizing counties \$750 or \$14.42 a week, 52 weeks a year.

(It should be noted that in order to maintain annual salaries of \$750 it is necessary for the legislature to appropriate \$17,575,000 for the biennium, 1943-45)

State Department Budget request for Common Schools: \$10,787,500 a year
21,575,000 a biennium

(It is estimated that this amount with local funds would provide an average annual salary in equalizing counties of \$900.00, or \$17.31 a week for 52 weeks a year)

A comparison of 1942 average weekly wages in certain occupations, according to figures from the Mississippi Unemployment Compensation Commission, follows:

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Average Weekly Pay - 52 Weeks</u>
Cleaners, pressers, laundry workers	\$31.98
Bus drivers	36.08
Private industry (beginners)	21.60
Private industry (after nine months)	25.10
Welders (third class, minimum wage, without overtime)	30.24
Welders (first class, minimum wage, without overtime)	46.08
6000 white teachers (including \$2,000,000 budgeted 1943-44, in addition to regular appropriation)	<u>14.42</u>
6000 white teachers (if granted additional \$2,000,000 requested for 1944-45)	<u>17.31</u>

Many of our teachers will remain in the schools if they can make a living wage, a wage even partly comparable to that offered by industry and war production work. The time has come to act, to prove our faith and courage by deed and sacrifice. We must not stand idly by and see our schools closed for want of teachers and our children grow up in ignorance and delinquency. Let us as teachers and people always place "first things first" for the best interest of our children.