

Letter and enclosure from J. H. Spencer, November 1, 1916

To be considered "Confidential" for the present. J.H.Spencer Dubuque, Iowa, November 1, 1916. Dear Friend:

The undersigned Committee desires to call your attention to a bill that will be introduced at the next session of the State Legislature of Iowa. It outlines a sane and economical method of beginning the education of little children who are deaf, blind, defective in speech, or mentally subnormal.

THIS METHOD IS NOT AN EXPERIMENT. It is one, that is now in successful operation in many States. Wisconsin, for instance, has 25 day schools for the deaf, Michigan 15, California, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington several each.

Investigation shows that in Iowa today scarcely one-half of these children are being properly taught, and some of them do not go to school at all. The chief reason for this is that parents will not send their little children to a distant city to be educated.

The father of one little deaf child writes: "It is semi-inhuman for the State to expect parents to send their little deaf children to a distant city to be educated—divorcing them from the greatest of Life's blessings, a mother's care and influence. In many cases parents refuse to make the sacrifice, and the children grow up in ignorance."

From the standpoint of economy alone, "day schools" for these children should be established in this State. Experience shows that the cost of starting their education in day schools is about one-half of what it costs to send them away from home to be educated

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by the State. These “day schools” are able to make use of all the up-to-date equipment of schools already established, and it is only necessary to supply the trained teacher.

This Committee is heartily in sympathy with the work that is already being done at State Schools. It is our sincere desire to strengthen them. Day schools, such as we advocate, are intended only for young children (4 to 10 years of age), and will, in our opinion, pave the way for better work at the more advanced State Schools.

Hoping that you will heartily indorse this bill, and work for its passage,

I inadvertently omitted this paper from my letter of Dec. 5, 1916 J.H. Spencer

Very sincerely, Committee. J.H.Spencer Dubuque, Iowa

(This bill was written by one of the best-known deaf mutes in the United States—an educated gentleman who has made a life-long study of the question. He has probably visited more schools for the deaf, and knows more about the subject, than any other living American.)

An Act authorizing and empowering any special, independent or common school district in the State of Iowa, to provide for, establish, conduct and maintain schools for deaf children, blind children, defective speech children and mentally subnormal children in such school districts in certain cases and appropriating money therefor.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Iowa:

Section 1. EDUCATION OF DEAF CHILDREN.— Upon application of any special, independent or common school district, complying with the provisions of this act, made to the state superintendent of education, he may grant permission to such district to establish and maintain within its limits one or more schools for the instruction of deaf children who are residents of the state.

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Any school district which shall maintain one or more such schools, shall through its clerk or secretary report to the state superintendent of education annually, or oftener if he so direct, such facts relative to such school or schools as he may require.

The courses and methods of instruction must comply with such requirements as may be outlined by the state superintendent of education. All schools for deaf children established under this act shall be conducted by the combined system which includes the oral, the aural, the manual and every method known to this profession; and the courses and methods of instruction shall be substantially equal or equivalent in efficiency to the course and methods of instruction established and employed in the State School of the Deaf at Council Bluffs, Iowa. The state superintendent of education may designate any member of his staff as an inspector to visit and note the progress of the schools provided for in this act.

Permission to establish such special classes may be granted to districts which have an actual attendance of not less than five deaf children, between the ages of four and ten years who may come under the provisions of this act. Blind children, defective speech children and mentally subnormal children are not to be admitted to the same class with deaf children but must each have separate classes and separate teachers.

There shall be paid out of the current school fund in the state treasury annually in the month of July, to the treasurer of the school district board, or of the board of education, in the school district maintaining such school or schools under the charge of one or more teachers, whose appointment and qualifications shall be approved by the state superintendent of education, the sum of one hundred (\$100.00) dollars for each deaf child instructed in such school or schools having an annual session of at least nine months during the year preceding the first day of July.

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It shall be the duty of the treasurer of the school district or of the board of education receiving the aid provided for in this section, to render annually to the state superintendent of education an itemized statement of all expenditures of said school or schools. Any surplus at the end of the year shall be reserved as a special fund for the education of the deaf children of that district and can be used for no other purpose.

Sec. 2. EDUCATION OF BLIND CHILDREN.— Section one (1) of this act shall, so far as applicable, provide for and apply to schools for the blind, except that there shall be paid out of the current school fund in the state treasury annually in the month of July to the treasurer of the school district maintaining a school or schools for the blind under the charge of one or more teachers whose appointment and qualifications shall be approved by the state superintendent of education, the sum of one hundred (\$100.00) dollars for each blind pupil instructed in such school or schools having an annual session of at least nine months during the year next preceding the first day of July.

Sec. 3. EDUCATION OF DEFECTIVE SPEECH CHILDREN.— Section one (1) of this act shall, so far as applicable, provide for and apply to schools for defective speech children, except that these schools shall be under the control of the state superintendent of education and that there shall be paid out of the current school fund in the state treasury annually in the month of July to the treasurer of the school district maintaining a school or schools for defective speech children under the charge of one or more teachers whose appointment and qualification shall be approved by the state superintendent of education, the sum of one hundred (\$100.00) dollars for each defective speech child instructed in such school or schools having an annual session of at least nine months during the year next preceding the first day of July; and a share of such sum proportionate to the term of instruction of any such pupil who shall be so instructed less than nine months during such school year.

Sec. 4. EDUCATION OF MENTAL SUBNORMAL CHILDREN.— Section one (1) of this act shall, so far as applicable, provide for and apply to schools for mental subnormal

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children, except that these schools shall be under the control of the state superintendent of education and that there shall be paid out of the current school fund in the state treasury annually in the month of July to the treasurer of the school district maintaining a school or schools for mental subnormal children under the charge of one or more teachers whose appointment and qualifications shall be approved by the state superintendent of education, the sum of one hundred (\$100.00) dollars for each mental subnormal child instructed in such school or schools having an annual session of at least nine months during the year next preceding the first day of July.

Sec. 5. LIMITATION OF ATTENDANCE.— Permission to establish such special classes as may come under the provisions of Sections 2, 3 and 4 of this act, may be granted to districts which have an actual attendance of not less than five children, between the ages of four and sixteen years.

Sec. 6. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.