

**Address of General George W.
Wingate, President, at the Annual
Meeting of the Public Schools
Athletic League, Held
December 7th, 1909,
New York City**



GENTLEMEN:

This sixth anniversary of the formation of the Public Schools Athletic League finds no check in the steady progress it has maintained since its organization. The interest taken in its work, both in and out of the schools, the improvement of the school children in physique, character and discipline, and the enlargement and efficiency of its activities, still continues, so that it is not an exaggeration to claim it to be the largest athletic organization in the world.

All new movements, especially of a public and philanthropic character, usually meet with considerable criticism and many disheartening drawbacks when first started. But our league has experienced few—almost none—of these. It has necessarily required a great deal of work on the part of its officers and friends to achieve the success that has been obtained, how much none can appreciate but the few that participated. This, of course, was inevitable and was cheerfully rendered. But from its inception to the present time the league has always received a kindly word and a helping hand from the school authorities, the children, the press and the public. Its day of experiment has long since passed. It has now become a fixed institution in our school system, too firmly rooted in scholastic and popular estimation ever to be disturbed.

The best test of our work is the imitation of it that is going on all over the country. Already eleven cities,—New Orleans, Baltimore, Seattle, New York, Newark, Troy, Buffalo, Cleveland, Birmingham, Ala., Tacoma, San Francisco, Kansas City, possibly Oakland and Helena, have organized Public Schools Leagues on the model of our own which are repeating in the schools of those municipalities the success that this league has achieved in the City of New York.

When we look back to the doubts and fears with which in December, 1903, immediately after our organization had been perfected, we undertook to hold a "Public Competition of School Boys" in Madison Square Garden, and the difficulties Dr. Gulick and the rest of us experienced in carrying it out, the present condition of the League seems incredible.

Not only then but for months after there was nobody in the schools who knew anything about athletics, the boys were in physique from twenty to fifty per cent below the standard of an average country lad, their ideas of honor and square dealing were perhaps even more than this below what was proper, and school pride hardly existed.

Now there is scarcely a school in the city in which the interest in athletics is not widespread and intelligent; where the children, both boys and girls, are not much stronger, more active and more healthy than in 1904; where ideas of honor and fair play have not been created, which never before were known, and where a spirit of school pride has not been developed, which constitutes a most important educational factor.

The reports of our valued Treasurer, Mr. S. R. Guggenheim, of our Secretary, Dr. C. Ward Crampton, of Mr. James E. Sullivan, Chairman of the Games Committee, and of Miss Catherine Leverich, the President of the Girls' Branch, and the others which will be presented to you, give the details of the

work during the past year. It is not, therefore, necessary that I should repeat them.

It is proper, however, to state that we have besides the Girls' Branch, which takes special cognizance of the exercises of the girls, twenty-four District Associations covering the 306 square miles constituting Greater New York, and which assume the direct management of the athletics of the 515 schools (excluding the 19 high schools) which are contained within that great area. That there are in the elementary schools one hundred and twenty-five associations having a membership of 110,000. These held games during the year, in which there were 80,000 competitors. In the high schools there are seventeen similar associations.

In the series of games organized by the "Sunday World" one hundred and forty seven schools held games, which were participated in by 33,460 boys; Public School 83, Manhattan, had 1,252 competitors on its field day; Public School 62, Manhattan, had 1,083. Three thousand two hundred and forty boys were awarded medals and one hundred and forty seven class banners were won. At the final meet fifteen hundred boys representing about one hundred schools participated.

Taking the whole series of athletic events, the aggregate of the boys and girls taking part during the year is estimated to be 150,000.

In addition, there were the games of the district leagues and the championship games of the league itself, making in all a tremendous aggregate.

These figures seem enormous. But notwithstanding this, there are fully 200,000 more of our school population of 650,000 that are yet to be reached.

These games are held both in and out of doors and cover nearly every field of athletic activity. Running in all its forms (except for long distance), base ball, basket ball, lawn tennis, jumping, putting the shot, pole vaulting, swimming and soccer (but not Rugby) foot ball for boys, folk dancing and appropriate athletic games and various other exercises for girls, are carried on under the auspices of the league. In doing this it seeks to encourage those exercises which will reach the mass of the school children rather than those which will be practised by a few experts. In particular, it approves and is developing with success a system of competition between classes where eighty per cent of each class must participate, and the average of all constitute the record. This is proving to be effective in inducing exercises by many who would not otherwise compete and who are the very ones who are most in need of it. Although new, the system is becoming popular. Its greatest advantage perhaps is that as the work of every boy counts, class pride exerts a pressure which compels many laggards to fit themselves for the competitions.

The following shows the results for the past year. It is not, however, a fair criterion, as far as the running is concerned, as bad weather prevented many schools from holding their trials and also made their reports too late to be received.

	Number of Schools Competing.	Number of Classes Competing.	Number of Boys Competing.
Standing Broad Jump....	81	736	18,910
Chinning	57	539	14,488
Class Running	36	273	7,967

It is with this idea of interesting the individual that the contests for the "Button" or Athletic Badge of the league have been established. This button is analogous to the soldier's marksman's badge and is annually awarded to each boy who attains a certain standard in running a short distance, jumping and "chinning" on a bar. It has proved as beneficial in its effects in athletics in the schools as the marksman's badges were in rifle shooting in the National Guard. When it was first established the number of badges that were won were few. The boys would run fairly well. But they could not jump and they had so little strength in their arms and chests that frequently in a good sized school only six boys would be able to "chin" themselves four times. In order to win this badge the boys have practised steadily with extraordinary results. This year the method was simplified by abolishing all age, weight and height qualifications and the standards were set as follows:

CLASS A.

60 yards dash—8 3-5 seconds.
Chinning on bar—4 times.
Standing broad jump—5 feet 9 inches.

CLASS B.

60 yards dash, indoors—8 seconds.
100 yards dash, outdoors—14 seconds.
Chinning—6 times.
Standing broad jump—6 feet 6 inches.

FOR HIGH SCHOOL BOYS.

200 yards run—28 seconds.
Chinning—9 times.
Running high jump—4 feet 4 inches.

In 1904-5, when this competition was established, but 1,162 buttons were won. It almost doubled each year, so that in 1908-9 the number was 7,049. This fall the Jamaica High School (which only won 6 buttons last year) won 24.

The league itself held seven championship events. It sanctioned twenty-three others.

The evening schools were permitted this year for the first time to participate in the league events and many entries from them were received.

One of the interesting features of a number of the games was the music which was furnished by the two bands,—that of Public School 21, Manhattan, and Public School 20, Richmond. These we were able to organize through the generosity of one of our directors, Mr. John S. Huyler, who paid the entire expense, about \$4,000, of providing the instruments for two full bands and also paid for the services of an instructor. As in addition to the pleasure of being a member, the boys learn a profitable occupation, there is a long waiting list for each of these bands.

In the elementary indoor championship games, 878 boys, representing 73 schools, entered, there being 94 relay teams.

In the elementary schools basket ball tournament one hundred and five teams entered, representing sixty-five schools. Eighty-two teams are now competing.

In the elementary schools swimming contests, three hundred

and thirty-six boys, representing thirty-six schools, entered, fourteen having relay teams.

In the elementary schools outdoor novice games, nearly 1,000 boys participated, there being one hundred and eleven teams in the relay races.

In the elementary schools outdoor championship games, 750 boys, representing fifty-seven schools, participated, and there were eighty-nine relay teams. In soccer foot ball six high school teams and seven from elementary schools competed.

In base ball there were one hundred and six teams, representing three hundred and forty-six schools and the final games were witnessed by 20,000 spectators. Few professional teams played better than Public School 28, Bronx, which won four and lost no games.

In none of the activities of the League has there been a greater improvement in the past year than that which has taken place in rifle shooting. Through the generosity of its friends it has been enabled to place a Sub-Target Gun Machine in each of the eleven largest high schools. It has also, through our director, Mr. Frank L. Pope, received a gift of twenty-two Krag-Jorgensen rifles to be used in these schools in gallery and out-of-door practice. These Sub-Target Gun Machines are so constructed that a boy practicing receives the same benefits as if he were actually firing a ball cartridge with an army rifle, while there is neither noise, danger nor expense. During the year over a thousand boys were regularly practicing, and on May 24 there were reported as qualifying as marksmen, by making a score of 45 points out of 50, 434, as compared with 273 last year. The badges for these qualifications were donated by the *Brooklyn Eagle*. Such boys as have won their marksmanship badge are permitted to practice with cartridges in the rifle galleries of the different regiments, and with the experience which they have had with the machine, soon develop into remarkable shots.

In the tournament which took place under the auspices of the National Rifle Association at the Sportsmen's Show in February and March, 1909, at which a number of prizes were offered by different arms companies and others interested in the subject, over 1,000 boys participated—more, in fact, than the eight target ranges and the Sub-Target Gun Machines that were provided would permit. The shooting was done at 60 feet, bull's eye, one inch counting five; centre, $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches, counting four; inner, $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches, counting three. The shooting was fully equal to anything which has ever been seen in any of the National Guard competitions. In fact, the scores made by many of the competitors have never before been equalled. Thus, J. Ehrlich of the Morris High School, firing 120 shots with a possible score of 600 points, half shot standing and half prone, made 598, only missing the bull's eye twice; and the team of the Morris High School, firing 10 shots each standing and prone, made 557 out of a possible 600.

While some objections have been made to introducing military instruction in the schools, there certainly can be none to teaching the boys the use of the rifle. If this practice can be made general in the high schools, so that our youth may become sharpshooters, a force will be provided at a nominal expense which will render the nation able to defend its shores against any invader without the necessity of a large regular army.

The four athletic fields belonging to the city have been completed, with the exception that the want of funds prevented the construction of the grand stand which contains the dressing facilities at the Brooklyn Field, a fact which has been a great drawback to the use of this fine field. These fields have been used by a large number and have made possible the holding of many competitions which could not have otherwise taken place. In the spring of 1909 the system was adopted of allowing the different schools to have a field day, on which the whole school, with the exception of the smaller children, went in a body to one of the fields and held their class exercises and school games. This was taken advantage of by one hundred and twelve schools. It was considered by the principals and teachers to be a valuable innovation, greatly helping the athletics of the school and enhancing school pride.

In view of the fact that these fields were closed on Sunday because the Board of Education had no funds with which to provide the necessary attendants, the league offered, in the latter part of April, to operate them on Sunday afternoons from one to six o'clock at its own expense, provided it was permitted to do so. This offer was accepted and the league has kept the fields open until December. During this period they all have been used on Sunday afternoons by many hundreds of boys, whose conduct has been unobjectionable and who have been thereby kept away from the saloons and the streets. In doing this the league has spent in paying the wages of the caretakers \$523.50. While this sum is considerable, yet it is felt that the benefits which have been derived from it are much more than the amount expended. The work hereafter should, however, be carried on by the Board.

It is hoped that the course which has been adopted by the Board of Education in keeping open the playgrounds and school facilities for exercises after school hours will be continued. Nothing is more needed in the city than places where the children can practice their exercises and have an opportunity to play, which is now denied them by the congested streets. The expense is trifling and it should not be regarded for an instant when compared with the benefits which will result. If these playgrounds are kept open it will afford a chance for many to become proficient in athletic games which they do not now possess, besides keeping them away from bad influences. That many additional playgrounds are needed for the children of the city is a matter which is too clear for argument.

Few appreciate the unselfish work which is done by many of the male teachers in the schools who have steadily given their afternoons, day after day, to promote the athletic training of the boys. This has been not only given by them to the boys of their own schools, but was extended to those belonging to other schools which, in consequence of having few or no male teachers, were deprived of the necessary instruction. The teachers who did this not only lost their own time, but were prevented from attending many lectures and other methods of additional study which would have counted upon their promotion record and which they could ill afford to lose. It is therefore gratifying to know that the Board of Examiners decided to give the teachers

who have done this a credit for their work. This is certainly but just. In fact, it cannot well be denied that a teacher who spends his afternoons in coaching boys in athletic games, gets a practical experience of boy nature and an executive ability which makes him more fit to teach a class than he would be if he had spent the same time in hearing lectures or studying any pedagogical subject that could be imagined.

The league is also under the greatest obligation to the various commanding officers of the National Guard of New York and Brooklyn, who have cheerfully granted the use of their respective armories for its many games and for those of the different schools, without the use of which it would have been impossible to hold them.

I also desire to express its thanks for the many beautiful trophies and other prizes which have been given to it, a list of which will appear in the Secretary's report, also to the *Sunday World*, the *Herald* and the *Brooklyn Eagle*, for the great help they have rendered.

The league now has one hundred and thirty-six trophies, most of them expensive and handsome. Seven were permanently won during the year and twelve new ones have been presented.

The work of the Girls' Branch is necessarily managed upon largely different lines from what is required for boys. It is, however, even more needed and is doing even greater good. By training the teachers, who in turn instruct the classes, over 19,000 girls have been provided with healthful and joyous recreation. There are, however, 285,000 more girls who require it. This has been prevented through inability of the ladies of the league to procure the necessary funds. They also have had great difficulty in securing prizes for competition, although there has been little trouble in obtaining gifts of such prizes for the boys. This year there are 1149 teachers taking these classes, insuring after-school training for 50,000 girls, a tremendous advance for one year.

With every year the standard of athletic ability in the schools becomes higher, and records which were considered wonderful when made, are surpassed. Accompanying this is a marked improvement in carriage of the person, alertness of mind and body, and the general air of strength and health resulting from the athletic exercises which the children have pursued. Grati-fying as is this from the physical side, the improvement on the side of ethics, school discipline and *esprit du corps* is even greater, a fact which has constituted the supervising and teaching force of the schools firm supporters of our work. Under no circumstances is any pupil allowed to compete in any of the league games unless he is certified by his principal to have "B" in effort, proficiency and deportment during the month previous, nor unless he shall have attended his school for twenty weeks (except when regularly transferred). No school is permitted to offer any inducement to cause the pupil of any other school to sever his connection with such school for athletic purposes.

Every effort which can be extorted by those interested in the league is made to impress upon the schools that to be a good athlete means to be honorable and truthful, to despise anything

that is mean or underhand, not to boast as winners, and to "own up" when defeated.

When it is recalled that during the past year two different schools—Public School 6, Manhattan, and Public School 26, Manhattan, which had been declared winners in important competitions, of their own volition and without protest being made, declined to accept the award made them because they had discovered that there was an irregularity in respect to one of their representatives, it will I think, be agreed that these lessons have been taken to heart. Of course there are occasional instances where attempts to evade the rules take place. But I have no hesitancy in saying that on the whole the standard of honor and fair dealing in athletics among the New York schools need fear no comparison with that of any of our best colleges.

It is difficult for one not familiar with life in the congested districts of our great city to appreciate what the league has already accomplished, not only to give the boys a chance to have some healthful amusement, but to keep them out of vice and crime. It wages a persistent and highly successful war on cigarette smoking (that bane of our youth) and other bad habits. It keeps the boys out of gangs and similar temptations. This it does not by preaching, but because in becoming interested in athletics they are taught that they cannot excel unless they take care of themselves, and that to do this means the keeping away from these things.

The contributing members of the League are:

Annual members.....	249
Life members.....	88
Patron members.....	71
Total.....	408

From these and a few other sources the league received during the year 1909\$ 9,604.68

It spent 10,544.69
leaving a balance remaining of \$1,348.34 out of the balance of \$1,472.38 existing December 1, 1908.

This number of contributors is but a handful compared with those of our citizens and particularly of those who received their education in the public schools, who would be supposed to be interested in our work. Yet in spite of the letters of Mayor McClellan and others appealing to our business men to join, our efforts to increase this membership have not been successful. If it were not for the generous contributions of Mr. S. R. Guggenheim, Mr. Payne Whitney, Mr. John D. Rockefeller and others, whose names appear in the Treasurer's report, our work would have been impossible.

In conclusion, I congratulate you all upon the good work that we have accomplished in the brief period of six years. I think that you will agree with me that in looking upon it on the ethical side alone and ignoring the vast improvement that it has effected in the strength, health and happiness of our school children, we have just cause for pride in having achieved something which will result in a lasting good to the community.