

Robert H. Brister has been superintendent of the Waco Public Schools for four years. He came to Waco from Taylor, Texas. He served the Taylor Public Schools from September 1919 to February 1935. He went to Taylor immediately from the United States Army where he served for two years - a year and a half of that time he was overseas. During four months of the time spent overseas, he attended the University of Montpelier of Montpelier, France.

Mr. Brister was reared on a farm west of Burleson, Texas, in Johnson County. It was there that he learned the mastery of difficult problems. After graduating from the high school at Burleson, he attended Decatur Baptist College at Decatur, Texas. He graduated there in 1912, then began his teaching career at Miles, Texas, in Runnels County, where he was principal of the high school. After teaching in Miles for one year, he was elected as teacher of mathematics in the Ennis High School, where he served for three years. He continued his educational preparation during the summertime. During the year 1916-'17, he attended Baylor University, where he received his B. A. degree in the spring of 1917. He later did his master's work at the University of Texas. This degree was conferred in 1928. He continued to spend his summers at the University of Texas for a number of years, pursuing the Ph. D. degree.

Mr. Brister's activity in the position of educational leadership in Texas has been varied. He has served as president of the County Education Association in Williamson County, as



president of the Central Texas Division of the Texas State Teachers Association, as chairman of the Section of Superintendence of the Texas State Teachers Association, and as a member of the Permanent Committee for Financing Public Education in Texas. Last year, he served the Texas State Teachers Association as president. It was his duty and responsibility to reorganize the State Teachers Association under the new constitution. Under his leadership, the membership in the Association was increased approximately fifteen per cent.

During Mr. Brister's administration, the Taylor Public Schools attained one of the highest ratings in the State of Texas for a school system of that size. He was not only interested in maintaining the physical properties of the schools to a very high degree, but he believed in high scholarship and superior teaching efficiency. It has always been his philosophy that the people would cheerfully support a good school system. He believes that public education deserves adequate support, but that a full measure should be given in return for every dollar expended. To this end, he maintained a faculty while he remained in Taylor that was superior in scholarship and teaching ability.

Mr. Brister was one of the first superintendents in Texas to pioneer in the field of health education. He conceived, early in his administrative work, that perhaps the first obligation of the school to the child is to see that he has good physical and mental health. To this end, he puts forth much energy to see that children are examined annually and that remedial defects are



attended to. He is perhaps one of the most progressive men in the state in the eyesight conservation program. He has worked diligently in the school systems over which he has presided to see that each school room has adequate lighting for every child. He is also conscious of the fact that many children have been subjected to inadequate light in the home for purposes of study. In his work with the Waco Public Schools, he has endeavored to see that school buildings are not only well lighted, but are also made sanitary and safe from every other standpoint.

In the Waco Public Schools, Mr. Brister has been vigorous in the development of the curriculum in that he made it possible for every teacher of the school system to have six college hours of training at no expense to the teacher. Almost the entire curriculum has been revised in Waco under his leadership. A new salary schedule has been worked out, which makes it possible to reward scholarship and merit as well as tenure.

One thing has been attempted by Mr. Brister in the Waco schools which is new to the State of Texas. He has endeavored to carry some education to every child in the city, regardless of his physical condition. With the aid of the general teaching force, every crippled or incapacitated child is located and is offered a teacher, either in the home or in some convenient locality where his work can be carried on. Many patients are taught in bed or in wheel chairs. Mr. Brister contends that we cannot afford to neglect the education of the crippled child. He needs education as much as anyone else. Mr. Brister points out that some of



the world's greatest leaders at present and in the past have come from among the cripples. He fully believes that most of these children can be made productive. They can at least be given enough learning to enable them to read and enjoy like the normal child.

It has always been a part of Mr. Brister's philosophy that a public school system should serve the community that supports it. It was to this end, some few years ago, that he undertook to develop the vocational agriculture program and the vocational home economics program in the City of Taylor, where he was superintendent. During twelve years' development of these programs, remarkable things were done for the farming area in the Taylor trade territory in Williamson County. He believes that the public school system in any center can contribute not only to the perpetuation of industry in the local community, but that it can also strengthen and further industrial development in new lines.

Mr. Brister has been an active civic and religious leader in the communities where he has lived. He has been superintendent of Sunday School, has taught a Sunday School class regularly for more than twenty years, and has been a church deacon. He has served as a Rotary Club president, and has been an active director in numerous character-building agencies, such as Boy Scouts and Y. M. C. A.