

Opportunity Schools

Prior to the 1930 census, the state superintendent of education for Alabama, and therefore the local county superintendent, became concerned with the illiteracy rate in Alabama. Since the 1930 census anticipated recording whether or not a respondent could read or write, Alabama set out to improve their status by offering adult education in existing schools in the county. These were called Opportunity Schools.

World War I did advance a more Progressive agenda in state politics, however, because it exposed the generally poor health and low literacy rates among recruits from Alabama. Governor Charles Henderson hired physician Hastings Hart of the Russell Sage Foundation to study the state's institutions. Hart's findings, including low spending on education and low school attendance compared with national averages, embarrassed Alabama politicians and enhanced the Progressive candidacy of Thomas Kilby, who served as governor from 1919 to 1923. Although unable to enact all the reforms he sought, particularly the elimination of the notorious convict-lease system, Kilby did use government power to make life in the state more equitable and to reform many outmoded institutions.

<https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php/alabama-in-wwi-home.html>

June 2, 1927 PA: Minutes of the County School Board meeting: The Board instructed Superintendent Wheeler to increase the opportunity schools and voted an allowance of \$300.00 for that purpose.