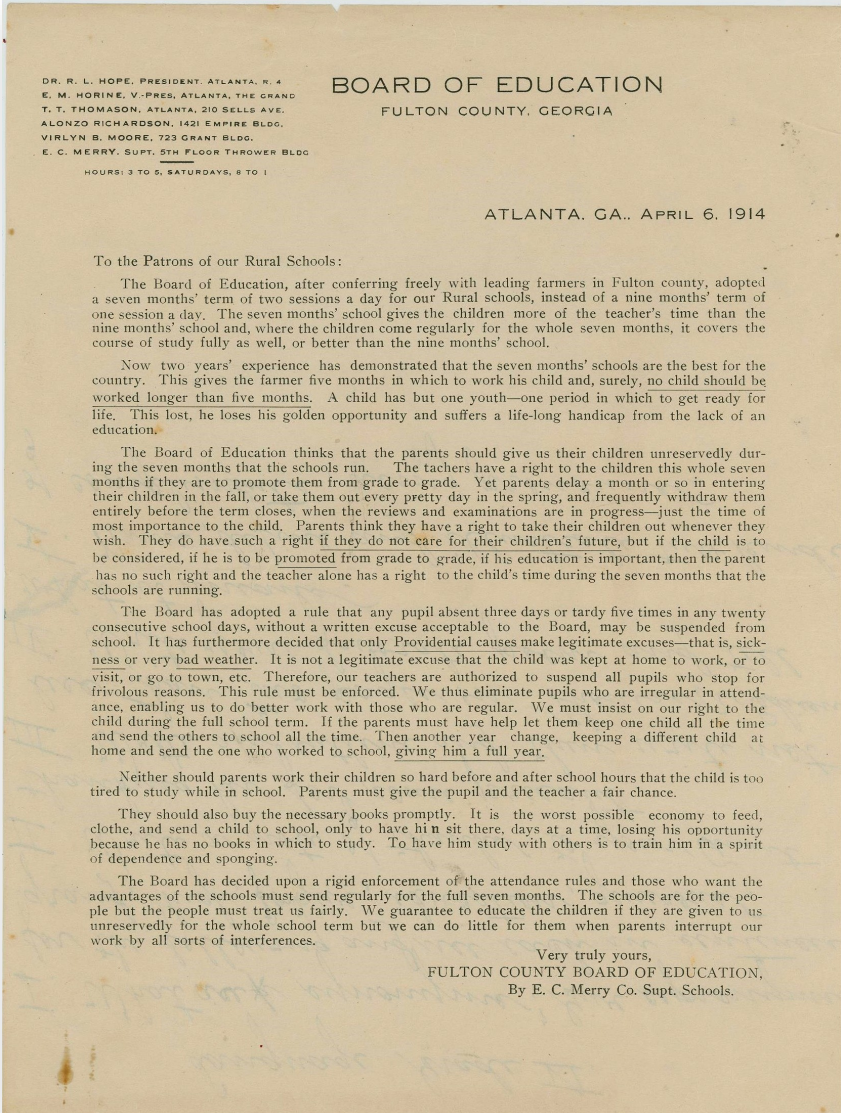


# Curiosity Corner

## Treasures from the FCS Archives

Welcome to **Treasures from the FCS Archives**, a repository of resources for teachers and history enthusiasts! Every month, we are sharing photos, artifacts, documents and other treasures for you to review, discuss and discover. We encourage you to click the links, scan the photos and dig deeper into these treasures, all of which can be found in the Fulton County Schools Archives. Enjoy!

### LETTER TO PATRONS OF OUR RURAL SCHOOLS: FCS & THE PROGRESSIVE ERA



Letter: *To the Patrons of our Rural Schools*, 1914  
Superintendent Edwin C. Merry, Fulton County Board of Education    FCS Archive: 1914.B23.3.3

This month’s Curiosity Corner focuses on a document written by **Edwin C. Merry**, superintendent of Fulton County Schools from 1908 to 1917. It outlines the parameters for a 7-month school year for students in rural portions of the county; and while it reveals a great deal about the **growth of metro Atlanta** over the last century, it also informs us about the daily life of students and their families – particularly those outside the city limits.

In 1914, roughly half the 43 schools in the system were at least 5 miles from the center of the city of Atlanta; and thus, considered rural. Communities such as Sandy Springs and Ben Hill faced a constant challenge in terms of attendance because of **transportation issues** and more importantly, children’s obligations on the family farms. Attendance became an enormous problem for schools to overcome, as teachers tried to cover a curriculum and promote students to the next level.

Merry’s proposal for a 7-month school year comes in the middle of an evolution in school terms that began with the establishment of the state education system in 1870. Originally, a 3-month school year (from October to December) was adopted; although students could attend longer terms at a cost of 5 cents per day. By the 1890s, the state had mandated a 5-month term, which could be separated into 50-day intervals to work around planting and harvesting seasons. In the early 20th century, 7 to 9-month terms were considered the standard.

Written during The Progressive Era, this letter addresses many of the issues being advanced during this time: **attendance at public schools** was becoming mandatory, child labor laws were becoming a national debate and wagons were being replaced with automobiles; and eventually, school buses.

To learn more about how these issues played out in Fulton County, click on the bolded text above. Click on the image of the letter for a larger/readable image.



#### Curiosity in the Classroom: *A Closer Look*

Click on the image above for a higher resolution jpeg. Project or distribute copies of the image. Ask students to read the correspondence and note anything they find interesting or surprising. For more in depth study, click on the **close reading guide** or use the **Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Analysis Tool**

Ask students:

- Who is the author/audience?
- What is the main objective of the author?
- Is there anything that is surprising or unusual?
- What questions come to mind from the topics addressed in this letter?
- What does this letter tell you about life in Atlanta during the early 1900s?

[Close Reading Guide](#)

#### Lesson Ideas & Links: Connecting to Standards

[Elementary School Connections](#)

[Related Primary Sources](#)

[Middle School Connections](#)

[Ask the Teaching Museum](#)

[High School Connections](#)

[Additional Online Resources](#)

For more information and resources or to connect with staff at the **Teaching Museum**, contact us at [archives@fultonschools.org](mailto:archives@fultonschools.org)

#### What was “RURAL” in 1906?

[Click here](#)

