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Colonial Classroom: Then and Now



EDU 324 History of American Education



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Colonial Period	Current Day
The schoolmaster relied on fear to motivate children and to keep them in order	The teacher relies on rewards to motivate and encouragement to keep in line.
Wearing dunce cap for poor academic performance	More one on one time with student to improve academic performance
Classes were held in the house of the schoolmaster	Classes are held in rooms inside the school building
Instruction were primarily religious and authoritarian	Instructions are academic based and more flexible

Colonial Classroom Then and Now

The Colonial period for education laid the foundation for the education we see today. Although many things have changed, it is a result of our educational system evolving to accommodate the ever-changing times in America. In the Colonial times, there were fewer schools due to the population and the amount of importance stressed on education. Parents taught their children how to read and write using the bible and hornbooks. According to authors Jennifer Monaghan and Arlene L. Barry (n.d) state, "Hornbooks were imported into the colonies early in the American experience, and there are advertisements for them as late as 1772" (p.6). The schools were generally small and a majority of the children (boys) learned a trade to carry on their father's business once he retired. Girls for the most part were not allowed to go to school; instead, they were given special lessons on how to run a household. Lessons that the girls learned were sewing, serving tea, etiquette, and socialize in a respectful manner. Additionally, all the grades from Kindergarten through 12th grade were all combined, meaning you had all ages in one room and one school.

The current educational system now separates schools into elementary (K-5), middle (6-8) and high school (9-12). There are many schools and they are much larger then there colonial predecessors. There are buses that will transport children to and from school. Both boys and girls are allowed to attend school and the varieties of subjects have drastically increased. The

punishments for students are less strict than they were in the colonial period. Instead of the physical chastisement handed out to students, they are put in detention, suspended or even worse expelled from school.

The colonial practice that needs to be continued today is the apprenticeship system. An apprenticeship system involved a child being entrusted to a master to learn a trade, which some children were, educated (Webb, 2014, Chap 2). The apprenticeship system brought stability to the skills that are lacking today. The reality is that not everyone will head to college for a degree but there are trades out there that need to be filled. Teaching someone in his or her younger years a trade will fill those gaps that have been missing for so many years and practically what allowed America to thrive in the industrial ages. Having schools that offer some type of apprentice system will allow those that are interested a jumpstart on their career.

As shown in the graphic organizer, colonial period versus current day has evolved over the years. From fear being the motivating factor to encouraging and rewarding in order to keep students in line. Our educational system went from embarrassing students due to poor academic showing to spending more time with that student that needs to improve his or her academic performance. Each change has given the teacher a greater academic flexibility to help students to elevate to the next level of their academic journey. For example, problem based learning provides teachers the flexibility to develop students to concentrate on real world complex issues that develops logical thinking in a case study approach (21st Century Skills for Students and Teachers, 2010, p.13). The relationship between student and teacher is more personal, which equips the student with the ability to succeed. The environment, reward system, relationships, and flexibility provide teachers the much-needed key to reach a student during classroom learning.

References

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