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Evolving Education

“Teaching is not what it used to be.” This is a commonly used phrase by many teachers. Changes have occurred in the education system throughout the decades; however, there have been many drastic changes within the last couple of decades. I had the privilege of interning with my fifth-grade teacher during my senior year of high school, and I got to witness how much has changed just within the time span of seven years. The available courses and how they are taught are often manipulated. Technology plays a major role in teaching as well. Methods of disciplining students have also changed drastically. And, there has been a decline in the arts throughout schools. Although education’s priority has always been fulfilling student’s highest potential, it is undeniable that there have been massive reforms in the education systems from as early as the 1960s to today.

Teachers have always had guidelines to help them organize themselves. According to Sedlak’s *Who Will Teach? Historical Perspectives on the Changing Appeal of Teaching as a Profession*, “[There is] no consensus about how schools should be restructured to accommodate the professional model of teaching” (7). Sedlak states that while there are guidelines, there is no specific way to interpret them. Sedlak states, “It means that within the classroom teachers will be expected to teach academic subject in intellectually honest and practical ways [...]” (7). Teachers had the leisure to cover material however they wanted, as long as they taught the required criteria. However, this text was written in the 1980s and times have changed. Teachers
now teach based off standards. When I was in back in my old fifth-grade classroom, I was excited to ask my teacher if he would be reading *Where the Red Fern Grows* to the class. But, I was disappointed to find out he was no longer allowed to teach that book in class. He said it was not in the standards, so he did not have the luxury to read it anymore. Even though it was a simple book, this is an example of how teachers are being restricted to the material they can teach. Teachers went from teaching what they pleased to teaching strictly by standards.

Likewise, technology has also changed throughout the years. Before the 1960s, all the resources teachers had included a blackboard, chalk, projectors, and books, but then came along the invention of the whiteboards and dry erasers and the spread of projectors, which made teaching easier. Now technology has expanded tremendously in classrooms. Aside from whiteboards and dry erasers, there are many other tools to help make teaching easier: computers, active boards, laptops, ipads, and even phones (The Evolution of Classroom Technology). Winslow states, “Effective technology utilization modeled by school administrators both facilitates and unifies the efforts of students and teachers to create a digital-age learning culture within a school” (188). It is evident technology has had a significant impact on the way teachers teach and students learn. Before computers, students and teachers had to research through encyclopedias and almanacs. In contrast, today, if anyone wants to figure something out, they have the power to do so at their fingertips, on their phones. Testing was always done with pencil and paper; however, now a lot of standardized testing is being done on computers. Modernizing school’s technology helps the students and teachers become more acquainted with the world today.

Furthermore, disciplinary in schools have also altered throughout the years. According to Allman, “School administrators' use of out-of-school suspension began as a method of reducing
student misbehavior in the 1960s and has continued to be used since that time” (2). While out-of-school suspension is still being used in schools today, there are plenty of methods that are no longer in use. For example, after-school detention is no longer being used in schools anymore. Paddling was once a common form of discipline, however many states in the United States have made it illegal. Whenever I was in fifth grade, I remember cases where some kids were spanked in the principal’s office. Yet, none of the fifth graders I was interning with had to get a paddling. It seemed as if the school was turning to positive reinforcement rather than punishing the students. Students who behaved were rewarded with “wolfy bucks,” which were like golden tickets they could cash in for prizes. Schools are leaving behind punishment and promoting positive reinforcement for disciplinary sources.

In the same way the discipline in schools has evolved, so has the arts. Creative arts used to be an essential part of education. But, now it seems overlooked. While there are still music classes in school, many creative classes have been removed from schools due to cutbacks. Art used to be a main subject, but now it is not even an elective. I remember going to art class once a week, but the fifth graders I observed did not have that opportunity. Band used to be something students could be a part of in the fifth grade. Now, students do not have the opportunity to be in band until the seventh grade. Even though these electives were restricted due to economic reasons, this is depriving children of a creative outlet at an earlier age that could foster greater independence and thought.

The reformation of education has been very drastic. Teachers always had guidelines to follow, but they went from teaching with freedom as they thought appropriate to only teaching what they are told. While it is evident technology is more prominently used now than the 1960s, the tools educators had both then and now help make a difference in education. The ways to
discipline children in school have also varied, but discipline is still constantly being used within schools. Creative arts are still in school, but subjects like art and band are often non-existent or marginalized. Education has both improved and declined, but it must continue to change and reform itself to create the most promising future possible for the children of today and tomorrow.
Works Cited


Sedlak, Michael|Schlossman Steven. “Who Will Teach? Historical Perspectives on the Changing Appeal of Teaching as a Profession.” *ERIC - Education Resources Information Center*, Publication Sales, The Rand Corporation, 1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90406-2138 ($4.00)., 31 Oct. 1986, eric.ed.gov/?id=ED292184.
