

20th Century Classrooms



Typical classroom – teacher-centered, fragmented curriculum, students working in isolation, memorizing facts. Venetia Elementary, Jacksonville, Florida – 5th grade, Mrs. Johnson, 1959-60.

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The “Zoo School”, aka The School for Environmental Studies, is an alternate, public school in Minnesota. A perfect example of real-life, relevant, project-based 21st century education.

Physical Environment	
Cemetery Method – students are in rows, very quiet and very still.	No rows – classrooms have a variety of learning spaces, multi-purposed, in which students move about freely.
Learners work in isolation.	Learners work collaboratively.
Classroom is within 4 walls.	Classroom expands to the campus itself, then to the community – from local to global. The Global Classroom.
Teacher-centered: teacher is center of attention and provider of information	Student-centered: teacher is facilitator/coach. Students use information they have located to construct their knowledge and understanding.
Teacher controls everything the students do (or at least attempts to do so.)	Students are self-directed, moving from independent activities to interdependent activities as needed.
Emotional Environment	
“Discipline problems” – educators do not trust students and vice versa. No student motivation.	No “discipline problems” – students and teachers have mutually respectful relationship as co-learners; students are highly motivated.
Little to no student freedom	Great deal of student freedom
Low expectations	High expectations – “If it isn’t good, it isn’t done.” We expect, and ensure, that all students succeed in learning at high levels. Some may go higher – we get out of their way to let them do that.

Curriculum/School is irrelevant and meaningless to the students.	Curriculum is connected to students' interests, experiences, talents and the real world.
Students must raise hand to speak or ask a question.	Room is filled with the sounds of students collaborating, teaching each other, researching, designing and creating.
Academic Environment	
Focus: memorization of discrete facts	Focus: what students Know, Can Do and Are Like after all the details are forgotten.
Lessons focus on the lower level of Bloom's Taxonomy – knowledge, comprehension and application.	Learning is designed on upper levels of Blooms' – synthesis, analysis and evaluation (and include lower levels as curriculum is designed down from the top.)
Textbook-driven	Research-driven – students construct their knowledge as they conduct research.
Passive learning	Active Learning
Time-based – seat time is what counts. There is no allowance for the fact that students learn at different rates.	Outcome-based – the point here is not seat time but demonstrating that the learning outcomes were achieved, whenever that may be.
Fragmented curriculum	Integrated and Interdisciplinary curriculum
The curriculum is test-prep, marching through the standards one by one.	The curriculum is relevant, rigorous and real world. The content standards and skills are learned as a result of project-based learning experiences.
Grades averaged	Grades based on what was learned (better yet, no grades, just evidence of learning.)
Teacher is judge. No one else sees student work.	Self, Peer and Other assessments. Public audience, authentic assessments.
Print is the primary vehicle of learning and assessment.	Performances, projects and multiple forms of media are used for learning and assessment.
Diversity in students is ignored.	Curriculum and instruction address student diversity.
Literacy is the 3 R's – reading, writing and math.	Multiple literacies of the 21 st century – aligned to living and working in a globalized new millennium.
If technologies are available they are used as digital versions of textbooks and worksheets.	Technologies are used as tools, as vehicles to deliver higher level learning experiences.