

Future Classrooms May Not Have Windows, Report Cards

Washington — Windowless, ungraded, no report cards — this is school?

It may very well be the school of the future, say education authorities at the National Education Association, pointing to various experimental studies now under way on school building design, teaching tools, changes in the curriculum. Here are some of them:

Windowless schools: studies are under way in several places to determine whether schools without windows help students to concentrate.

Classrooms of different sizes: if the "team teaching" method becomes popular — the method in which a group of specialized teachers takes responsibility for a large class — school buildings will have to be changed. Team teaching will require large rooms for use when the entire class gets together, and smaller rooms for specialized small group instruction.

Television: an increasing number of schools are using it now as a teaching aid. This way a special teacher in, say, foreign language or science, can teach a number of children at one time.

Teaching machines: they may also find a greater use, depending on the outcome of continuing studies on their effectiveness and that of the material they use to break down studies into such small steps that it becomes easy for a student to understand.

Films and slides: these already are being used extensively and intensively, as teachers find they save explanation and lecture time.

Tape recorders: especially helpful in teaching foreign languages, recorders now are being used in conjunction with slides and films to provide a running commentary for the ear to match the visual stimulus to the eye.

Opaque projectors, calculating machines, electronic lab kits, even small digital computers: all are finding a place in the modern classroom, but not without some healthy skepticism.

Subject matter: for several years, educators have recognized that the accumulation of knowledge is increasing so fast that teachers cannot teach — nor students learn all the facts there are to know in a given area. So subject matter teaching — in math, for example — is being taught so students will understand the theory behind the facts. And, along with this, goes the idea that man can never stop learning. Automation will force him to be a vocational student all his life, for automation will probably force him out of at least three jobs. Then, he'll have to learn others.

Fewer Outside Tests

Tests: there will, undoubtedly, be fewer "outside" tests — those initiated by groups outside the local school system — which have already come under fire from school administrators. It's wasteful to give so many tests, the administrators say, because many of the tests measure the same thing — academic ability.

Grades: an articulate group of educators, whose number is growing, says that grouping pupils on the basis of age is illogical, because age alone has little to do with the level of ability of the student. Grouping on the basis of grades in each subject is better. But the best is abolishing grades, and abolishing report cards, too. Instead, each pupil should be taught, these educators say, as much and as fast as he can absorb it. The bright student could then move ahead of his age group. The slow student could lag behind without the unwholesome pressures to catch up that he now must shoulder.

What else is ahead? If you look far enough ahead, you might see something like this: Students studying a foreign land making field trips there by jet during class; teachers for the local schools being recruited from all over the world; the school day and the school year being adjusted to serve the needs of the individual student; the school building itself disappearing or becoming only a coordinating center as education moves from the classroom to the universe.



COOKING TECHNIQUES — Demonstrated at Aviation High school, Redondo Beach, Calif. to get these translucent fiberglass classrooms with surrounding light from luminous ceilings. This room was the first light, better sight. (Photo Filon Corporation)

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