

# Progressive Education

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# History

- Movement began in late 19th Century in Europe and the US
- Alternative to traditional teaching that taught students to become good factory workers
- Largely pioneered by John Dewey

# Definition

- Similar to Montessori ideals
- Looked to educate the “whole child”
- Uses hands-on, experiential teaching and an integrated curriculum
- Democratic classrooms where students have a voice in decision making
- Flexible curriculum
- Interage classrooms

# Benefits

- More reflective of world
  - Subjects are taught together just as there isn't a division of topics in the real world
  - Students work collaboratively in all activities just as one might work with colleagues on a project
  - Students have a choice in learning just as one can choose their job and focus
- Reduce anxiety
  - Students have increased stress and burden and a lot of it is because of testing. Progressive schools don't utilize standard grading and tests finding other means to evaluate progress.
- Learn by doing
  - Engages students and allows them to become more curious about what they are learning
- Learning to be leaders and a member of a community
  - Many schools will have 2 grades in one classroom so students can practice being leaders at a young age
    - Stay with a teacher for two years so they can better understand the student
    - Age can be an arbitrary division of kids so this can help remedy that issue

# Barriers to progressive education

- No Child Left Behind and Every Child Succeeds Act
  - These laws increase the amount of standardized tests that students must do
    - Limits time spent on students interest as teachers must “teach to test”
  - Increases curriculum standards
    - Doesn’t allow for childrens fluctuating interests and a flexible curriculum
    - Decides what students should know across the country and doesn’t account for differences
  - These laws were created to increase the US international ranking but it has not helped
  - This is the standard for education today

Sources: <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/the-every-student-succeeds-act-an-essa-overview/2016/03>  
<https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/no-child-left-behind-an-overview/2015/04>

# Proposed Solutions

- Federal revisions to Every Child Succeeds Act
  - Allowing for more flexibility and restore the right to create education standards back to the states
- Create pilot programs in certain districts
  - There already are some schools that progressive
  - Reteach teachers to implement progressive ideals and hire new teachers with a passion for progressive education
  - Have an expansive study to evaluate children as they move through progressive school into contemporary higher education
  - Use this model as a blueprint for the rest of the country if successful

# Why this is important

- American education is falling behind
  - Low international test scores
  - This can be a way to improve our education
- These ideals are already working in Scandinavian countries and many schools in the US
  - Finland, a country with top ranking public schools, uses the ideas of John Dewey in their school systems
  - A public school district in Chicago are all progressive schools and doing well
- Redefine success
  - Move away from the idea that grades are the most important and prioritize student well being, social ability, and help kids become independent
- Improve student and family choice
  - The majority of progressive schools in the US are private and limit who can attend. If this model is to become more widespread then, more students from diverse backgrounds can participate

Sources: <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/05/inside-a-multiage-classroom/525624/>,

# Questions

- What do you remember about your education?
- Did you feel supported in school?
- What would you change?
- What is important to you that should be taught?
- How do we allow for a flexible curriculum while still ensuring students are taught what is important?