

Myths of the Modern American Mind: Education

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“Trying to understand is like straining [to see] through muddy water. Have the patience to wait! Be still and allow the mud to settle.”

— Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching

Key Elements of the Humanist Education

Grammar – the study of reading, writing and vocabulary particularly Latin and Greek

Logic – Aristotle’s *Logic* as a foundation for critically examining arguments and the world.

Rhetoric – Spoken and written argumentation to inform and convince – adjunct to logic and grammar.

Humboldt Model 1810-50, Key Elements of the Prussian Education System, Mann Reforms (1840s)

Free primary schooling, at least for poor citizens

Professional teachers trained in specialized colleges

A basic salary for teachers and recognition of teaching as a profession

Funding to build schools

Supervision at national and classroom level to ensure quality instruction

Curriculum inculcating a strong national identity, involvement of science and technology

Secular instruction (but with religion as a topic included in the curriculum)

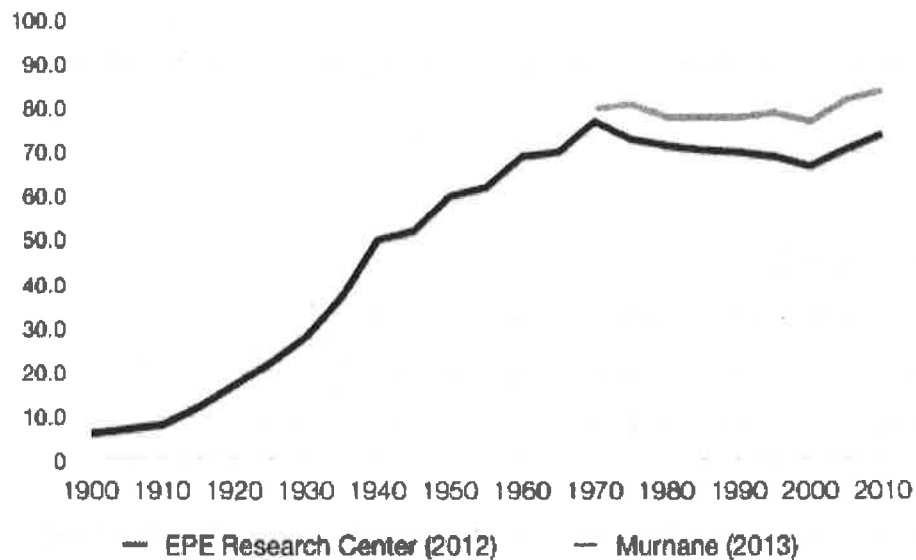
Dewey and the Progressives vs. Taylorites (1920s) “A society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of a change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability. Otherwise, they will be overwhelmed by the changes in which they are caught and whose significance or connections they do not perceive.” Dewey

Our schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw products (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life. The specifications for manufacturing come from the demands of twentieth century civilization and is the business of the school to build its pupils according to the specifications laid down. Ellwood Cubberley, *Public School Administration*

Sputnik, Thomas Friedman, Common Core and STEM

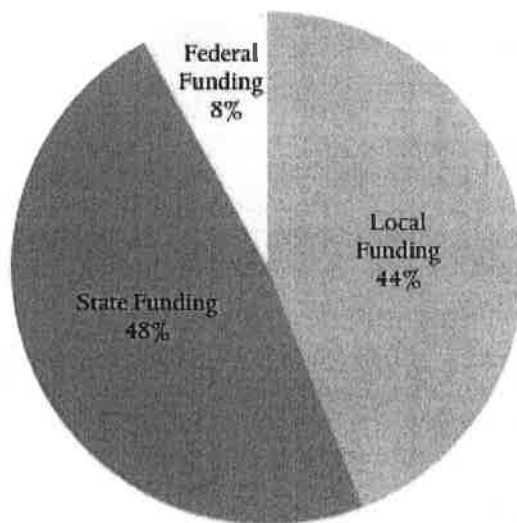
The Common Core is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade . . . For years, the academic progress of our nation’s students has been stagnant, and we have lost ground to our international peers . . . The Common Core is informed by the highest, most effective standards from states across the United States and countries around the world. The standards define the knowledge and skills students should gain throughout their K-12 education in order to graduate high school prepared to succeed in entry-level careers, introductory academic college courses, and workforce training programs. (Corestandards.org)

Table 1: High School Graduation Rate, 1900-2010



K-12 Education Funding

Average Shares 1980-Present



Source: National Center for Education Statistics | Graphic: Hagit Bachrach

Next Lecture: **American Exceptionalism** April 16th