



A Brief History of Progressive Education with Dr. Jason Edwards

Lesson 2: Education in America before Progressive Education

Outline:

“How did we get to where we are today?”

“Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery.”

Horace Mann

“The fruit of liberal education is not learning, but the capacity and desire to learn, not knowledge, but power.”

Charles William Elliot

Core Elements of Progressive Education

- Publicly funded school system
- School is standardized and made universally obligatory.
- School is understood as not simply academics.
- School is understood as a means towards perfecting society.
- School is understood as a learning environment centered on the student’s interests.
- School is understood as a learning environment guided by applied scientific research.
- School is understood and designed to be a learning environment aimed at facilitating vocational development (i.e. job preparation).
- Women are accepted as teachers, specifically elementary school teachers.
- School involves a “differentiated curriculum”.
- Federal government directly involved in education.
- Schools based on the “German specialist model” of education; (i.e. not the liberal arts - the focus instead is on specialists).
- School is about developing “new” knowledge, rather than the transmission of knowledge through generations.
- Progressive education is based, in part, on Romanticism, (Ex. Jean Jacques Rousseau’s Emile) → basic assumptions in progressive education’s “anthropology”:
 - The child is not understood as a fallen human being but understood as naturally innocent and oppressed human being.
 - Children are understood to be “active” learners.
- Nature is more important than books.
- Kindness is better than discipline.