Centennial: Schools - Then and Now

Summary

by Sheri Sohm. Schools reflect the culture of the time.

Materials

Deseret News article, 'Education in the Territory' from 'Schools, They Went With the Territory' by Twila Van Leer, July 3,1994 (article and statistics page)

Background for Teachers

Early settlers felt that education was extremely important and quickly set up public and private schools to provide for the needs of their children. Using an authentic graph showing statistics from an earlier time, students can compare and contrast schools from the present and the past. Teachers may use 'the school' to examine differing dress styles, educational issues, school architectural styles, and cultural attitudes.

There are many options for teachers who wish to study the 'Utah School.' Students may wish to research the history of their school or the school that they would have attended 100 years ago. Students might collect historical information about their school in the form of pictures, school records or oral histories.

In the spirit of Utah's centennial, students may wish to create a history of their school to be submitted to the Utah State Office of Education or the Utah Heritage Foundation.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will compare and contrast schools from the past and the present.

Students will collect historical information relating to their school.

Instructional Procedures

See preface material for the Utah Centennial Lesson Plans book.

Distribute the article 'Education in the Territory' for students.

Ask students to read the Report on School Enrollment, Growth of Public Schools, 1880 Census, List of Equipment at the University of Deseret, and the Admonition to Teachers. They will answer the following questions:

Determine the percentage of growth in Utah schools from 1862 to 1883. If the growth in schools and enrolled students continued at the same rate that it did from 1873 to 1883, how many schools and students would be found in Utah today? Where can this information be found? (Have students contact the Utah State Office of Education for the correct numbers.)

In 1880 the Average pay for teachers was S35 per month for men and S22 per month for women. How much would that be for a year? What would be the justification for men receiving higher pay? Do men still receive higher pay in the work force? Request a copy of the local district's starting pay scale. Compare salaries for teachers then and now. What is the percentage increase in salary from 1880 to today? Using the same rate of increase what would be a teachers salary 100 years from today?

Examine the list of equipment at the University of Deseret. Inventory the school supply room. Are these items found in your school? Try to find out what a sextant, hydrometer and theodolite is.

Read the 'admonition to teachers.' Are these character traits still important today? Write a paragraph that describes an ideal teacher.

Seek other ways to compare and contrast past and present schools. Connecting the Past to the

Present: Remind students that much has changed in the last 100 years and much will change in the next 100. Determine what the students of the future might want to know about students today. Collect interesting facts or artifacts that could be used for a scrapbook or a time capsule.
Examine school records, library and historic collections. As a class or student council project, compile historic information about the school for a centennial project. What resources are available to help with this collection? The list could include the school library, older neighbors, the local library, the county recorders office, historical pictures, diaries, etc.

Extensions

Ask students to write about a favorite school day. Encourage details to help future students visualize the school and its daily activities.
Create a photo display picturing teachers, clothing styles, the school building etc.
Identify a Utah school that has celebrated its own centennial. Encourage students to contact the school to discover how they researched the information that was collected about their school.
Invite speakers to share stories about the 'olden school days.'
Create a time capsule. Design a capsule that will last 100 years. Brainstorm the types of objects to be considered for the capsule. Ask students to prioritize and justify their choices.
Write a letter to a student 100 years from today. What would make interesting reading for the student of the future? Relate details that describe a normal day at school.
Note to teachers:
For further lessons on a 'Utah School,' refer to the Unit from Expanding the Curriculum. (Unit obtainable from the Utah State Office of Education.)

Authors

Utah LessonPlans