

Grade Level **3-12**Class Periods **1**

Goals/Objectives/Student Outcomes:

Students will:

- Learn about past school practices and teaching methods.
- Understand about the process of learning.
- Learn about the administration and financing of schools on all levels.
- Understand changes in public attitudes toward schools during the past hundred and fifty years.
- Learn about the changes in buildings and learning materials in different places at different times.

Materials:

1. Yearbooks from schools, old and new
2. Annual reports from school districts, old and new
3. College and technical school catalogs, old and new
4. Time to interview teachers and administrators
5. Newspapers, old and new
6. Time to listen to radio and watch TV reports of school matters
7. History text books and other reference books
8. Magazine articles, old and new
9. Biographies that mention school days

Background:

Literacy is one of the most important characteristics of a free society. Because Americans believe that a literate and informed citizenry will make wiser election decisions, we are willing to spend enormous sums of money to ensure that people learn to read and write. Yet universal literacy has not always been held in such esteem. When the majority of the people in the country were farmers, many thought that learning how to do work properly was most important. Some felt it was essential that children learn to read so that they could read the Bible.

During the past 400 years the methods of training and educating people have changed, from the New England Primer and the Dame

School of Colonial times, to the later Horn Books and McGuffey's Readers, and finally to today's computer laboratories.

Usually the intent has been the same—to teach children and adults to read, write, and do computations. But education also encompasses various kinds of learning, including understanding and perpetuating our culture, training for the professions, and higher education. Though the word "education" may mean different things to different people, most people are willing to pay taxes to support schools, make donations to private and special schools, and become involved in the process in whatever way suits the move towards the goals of education that they see as desirable.

Procedures:

This thematic lesson plan is intended to introduce this particular topic to students. The activities are intended to introduce students to the process of inquiry that can be applied to the study Iowa history. In many cases the same activities can be used to explore the topic in a variety of Iowa history time periods. This lesson plan can also be used in conjunction with other topical areas in this curriculum.

These thematic lesson plans underscore basic skills such as reading, writing, communicating orally, and collecting reference sources. Many of the activities will give students practice in using higher skills as in reading, writing, communicating orally, collecting reference sources and using a library; distinguishing between primary and secondary sources; using charts and timelines; and developing vocabulary. The teacher can introduce higher level skills through these activities such as collecting information from a variety of sources through observation and questioning; compiling, organizing, and evaluating information; comparing and contrasting; drawing conclusions or inferences from evidence; considering alternative conclusions; making generalizations; recognizing points of view; understanding how things happen and how things change; recognizing how values and traditions influence history and the present; grasping the complexities of cause and effect; developing a chronological sense; and understanding events in context.

Activities:

1. List all the grade levels and subjects taught in your school.

2. Interview teachers and administrators about the training they received and needed to be employed in their present jobs.
3. Collect photographs and other illustrations of the different types of buildings that have been used for school purposes.
4. On a map of your town, locate all buildings used for school or educational purposes.
5. Make a chart showing the changes in public school curriculum during the past 100 years.
6. Make a model or draw a picture of your school building.
7. On a map of Iowa locate all schools of higher education, such as community colleges, colleges, universities, and technical schools.
8. Write a report on schools that serve audiences with special needs.
9. List the types of learning materials available in your school.
10. Make a chart showing the size of classes for the various subjects and activities in your school.
11. What activities other than subject classes are available in your school? Why are they offered in the school?
12. Interview a lawyer or school board member about the laws that apply to schools and why such laws have been passed.
13. Make a bulletin board display of all schools that have ever operated in your county.
14. Spend a day in a one-room rural school and re-enact the life of a student from the time these buildings were first used.
15. Interview a teacher about the length and type of preparation necessary to become a teacher.
16. Research and write a report about the types of controversies that have occurred in schools, such as what students wear, what students can say, what kinds of books can be used, what extra curricular activities are appropriate, and who may attend and who may be excluded from extra curricular activities.
17. Debate the reasons for dividing schools into classes based on age groups vs. dividing schools into classes based on ability levels or interest groups.
18. Prepare debate materials on the question of why certain subjects are required of all students and other subjects are not.
19. Discuss the role of computers, audio visual equipment, and other mechanical devices in schools.
20. Write a fictitious diary of a student in a one-room rural school in your area a hundred years ago.
21. Write a fictitious newspaper, TV, or radio editorial about the most recent school bond issue or school tax increase in your community.
22. Read books about school life in another time and place, such as *The Hoosier Schoolboy* and *The Hoosier School Master*.

Assessments of Outcomes:

1. Prepare an ideal curriculum for a school of fifty years ago.
2. List the extra curricular activities offered in your school today and those offered 50 years ago.
3. Describe in words or drawings the typical clothing worn by students in your school today and that worn 50 years ago.

4. Make a chart of the rooms considered to be necessary for a school today and contrast it with the schools of 50 and 100 year ago.
5. Write a report analyzing the costs of operating public schools today and compare it with the costs 100 years ago. Be careful to analyze in terms of purchasing power, not just raw dollars.

Extensions and Adaptations:

Most of the activities listed under procedures can be easily adapted to meet the learning needs of most students at various ages. Many of the listed activities can be used as art, music, writing, math, or science projects. Be sure to draw on teachers within your school and resource people in your community. The folklife section of this curriculum provides a list of community resource ideas.

Resources:

Contact the Iowa History Resource Center at the State Historical Society of Iowa for a list of books, videos, organizations and ideas for studying Iowa history. Write to: Education Coordinator, State Historical Society of Iowa, 600 East Locust, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.