

Dewey Laboratory School

The University of Chicago Laboratory School or the Dewey Laboratory School as it is more often referred, began operation in 1896. It was shortly after John Dewey's appointment to the University of Chicago, that he began orchestrating plans to create a University operated primary school that would function as an experimental learning environment (Kliebard, 1995). Through the laboratory school, he wanted to create a supportive and interactive learning community that fostered the social and intellectual growth of students, while also providing a space where theoretical ideas could be implemented and tested within the areas of curriculum design, teaching and learning (Jacobs, 2010).

Dewey posited the goal for making the school a miniature community, which would work to achieve coordination between the individual and social factors (Kliebard, 1995). That is, the creation of a school environment that was enhanced by each student's emerging individuality, and at the same time provided students an opportunity to actively work together in order to solve real problems. Dewey believed that the work of the school should focus on the importance of the child's experience in the present, rather than focus on preparing the student for some future role or vocation in later life (Kliebard, 1995). Dewey developed an integrated curriculum that incorporated learning activities based on adult tasks that occurred in the home or greater community—he referred to these as the “occupations” (Jacobs, 2010). The school implemented carefully planned learning activities that were holistic in nature and addressed the younger child's normal curiosity of real-world activities. Older children had access to a more specialized, but flexible

curriculum that allowed for the exploration of topics that may have existed beyond the prescribed scope of learning objectives (Jacobs, 2010).

Kyle Clarke

References

Jacobs, B. (2010). Dewey Laboratory School. In C. Kridel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of curriculum studies*. (pp. 291-293). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412958806.n161>

Kliebard, H. M. (1995). *The struggle for the American curriculum, 1893-1958* (2nd ed.).
New York: Routledge.