

Eight-Year Study

For years, the Progressive Education Association expressed their frustration with the slow pace of curriculum change especially in the secondary schools. The Progressive Education Association believed that a major reason for this reluctance of change was due to the entrance requirements of colleges. In 1932, grants were secured and a plan was developed where colleges would waive the need for examinations or prerequisite courses to be taken by students from select schools. This would allow The Eight-Year Study, one of the major school-based curriculum research projects in the history of American curriculum studies (Pinar, 2010), to begin. The goal of this study was to uplift the regulation and domination colleges had over the secondary school curriculum. This allowed secondary schools more flexibility in how and what was taught. The students from these schools would be compared to the students who went through the traditional school curriculum. Eventually approximately 3,600 students from thirty secondary schools were included in the study.

During the initial years of the study support was given to the staff at each of the schools involved in the study to develop and implement a curriculum that they believed to be appropriate for their students. At the end of the experiment it was discovered that when paired with students that went through the more traditional secondary schools, the students from the experimental schools showed no impairment in their college preparation (Aikin, 1942). This study showed that schools can develop a curriculum that better meets the needs of their students without jeopardizing the education of their college-bound students.

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References

Aikin, W. M. (1942). *The story of the eight-year study*. Harper & Brothers.

Pinar, W. F. (2010). The Eight-year study. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 40(2), 295-316.