

Alternative Education: A Brief History

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All over the world people are talking about alternative education, but with the passage of time, the meaning of these words continues to change.

Many historians of public education believe that the American model of public schooling was first organized in the 1800s as a way to educate children while suppressing individualism and cultural diversity. The supposed aim of this system was to support the emerging corporate economy with a politically and socially homogenized workforce. This was social efficiency, a term often used by educational leaders.

Although this narrowly defined model became more deeply embedded in the culture, from its origins it faced resistance for a number of reasons. Diverse forms of schooling emerged, championed by a wide range of social reformers and individualists, religious believers and romantics. During the 1960s, interest in alternative educational options became a widespread movement.

For years there have been alternative education options for students who were challenged within the traditional educational system and included students with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, or behavioral problems. Many of the students served by alternative education programs were labeled at-risk.

Today there is a resurgence of interest in student-centered learning. In post-modern society, the philosophy of social efficiency is falling from grace. Parents and progressive educators are looking at new and innovative models of learning -- new alternatives for teaching and learning.

With the infusion of technology and access to information from sources around the globe, the options for alternative education seem virtually endless. While the classrooms of today look much the same as those of yesterday, we can barely imagine the classrooms of tomorrow or the communication skills and expansive knowledge of its students.

As the classrooms and students evolve, so does the meaning of the words alternative education. With the rapid pace of innovation, there seems to be no limit to the possibilities.

ODYSSEYWARE provides innovative online curriculum, a 21st century alternative to traditional classroom instruction. It meets the diverse needs of an evolving student base that includes students from various socio-economic, cultural, and developmental backgrounds. With an emphasis on interactive student-centered learning, it can be adapted for students requiring core courses, remediation, accelerated instruction, or an at-home learning environment. Available online anytime, its flexibility makes it a viable and engaging option for non-traditional students who are pursuing a diploma outside the classroom. It is proven alternative education for the 21st century.