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Reading Analysis: Rethinking Childhood and Back to Basics Learning

Compared to the Wien and Dudley-Marling article about the Ontario curriculum, the articles by Gorham and Janovicek feature a much more diverse perspective on education. In terms of diversity in education, what I can draw from these three articles is that the curriculum of schools becomes more diverse the farther away you are from the core. For example, Wien and Dudley-Marling discuss the Ontario curriculum and how the overly structured, outcome based curriculum is disadvantageous to students and teachers. However, even though the curriculum was re-written, it seemed as though little change occurred in terms of the structure. Compare that curriculum to the free school established in Ontario that is discussed in the Gorham article. Although the students learned the same basics as the students in the public education system, the structure of the school was changed drastically. Free choice for the students to choose what they studied was encouraged and the school was without a set schedule. Then, look at the free schools that were established in the West Kootenays in the article written by Janovicek. The back-to-the-land movement inspired free schools that focused on skills that would enable them to work in a rural area, explore their own interests, and made them aware of the area that they lived in. I think the varying changes in the rigidness of school structure and curriculum are stemmed from the schools’ distance from the core. Small change was seen within Ontario, but in rural BC big change took place.

Today, I think rural versus urban setting still plays a role in the curriculum and structure of a school. In an urban setting like Kamloops, there is a diverse range of schools. Kamloops School of the Arts, Bert Edwards School of Science and Technology, Lloyd George (French Immersion), and Montessori schools are some examples of specialized schools. While I cannot comment on the structure of the classrooms, each school has a different focus for their content and curriculum. There are also numerous other schools that follow the standard curriculum. In a rural setting such as Summerland, there are only two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. However, there is a strong focus on being outdoors and learning in nature, similar to what was seen in the Janovicek article.

A question that these articles made me raise is the presence of home schooling in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Was home schooling present at this time, or is it a relatively new concept? The free schools that were being established were the result of parents who were not happy with their childrens’ experience in the public school system and took it upon themselves to create a new learning environment for children. Could parents have taught their children at home? Did home schooling develop because of free schools? This is something I hope to look into further.