

Many great changes have taken place over the years in the methods of teaching. Again, it is necessary to generalize because of the vast amount of material available in this respect. Early in the school's history, tedious memorization, or rote as it was commonly called was the order of the day. Emphasis in this was found particularly in arithmetic (often called ciphering) reading, history, geography etc. The learning process was one of reading information given and then memorizing it--drilling over and over again the fundamentals such as the multiplication tables, historical places and dates and the like. Present day methods provide correlation of what is learned to everyday, understandable experiences. The aim is for the learning processes to be meaningful rather than mechanical.

Most of the readers of this history will not remember the "McGuffey Readers" but will certainly have heard of them. It was my pleasure to see and examine one of these 5th grade McGuffey's when I wrote the previous history. The content of these "Eclectic Series" was most interesting. To find Shakespeare's "Shylock or the Pound of Flesh" in a 5th grade reader was a bit startling to say the least. Many other melodramatic stories were noted also. Hardly a lesson failed to have the whole thing, or a portion thereof, marked for memorization. One of the most common criticisms of our present day methods by people of the above mentioned generation is the lack of assigned memory work. Good or bad--? Be careful your answer will probably date you!

Along this reading parallel, teaching by phonics (or phonetics--the sounds of letters and letter combinations) became obsolete in the early 1940's. A new method of learning to read, and subsequently spell, was introduced. This is often referred to as "sight" reading and involved the principle of recognizing a word as a total image and not as a series of sounds. And woe is me! How can I possibly tell in one short paragraph the mountainous repercussions to this method when some one in the 1950's blasted the whole system with a publication called "Why Johnny Can't Read." Many sympathizers with the author of the above publication (which ran as a serial in one of our local newspapers) recommended a return to the good old McGuffey readers.

At Miner, at least one of our teachers taught the phonics along with the sight method and our reading program was not criticized as severely as in some schools. Also in 1949, Miner organized a Remedial Reading class for those children who had not mastered their basic reading skills. There was much accomplished in this program and many children improved their reading abilities.

Schools have always been and will always be the target for criticism--some of it just, but much of it unjust. Without a doubt, however, the greatest blasting of our educational system came fast on the heels of Russia making the first probe into outer space with the launching of the earth satellite called Sputnik I. This was in October of 1957.

The United States and Russia had been openly competitive in scientific progress for many years, and it was sort of apathetically assumed by the U.S. and her friendly allies that she would be the