The Top 10 Educational Innovations of the past 100 years

American education is filled with innovations that come and go. Innovations can take the shape of ideas, policies, practices, and/or products. Innovations may have lasting positive or negative effects, while others might have little impact.

Directions: Below are more than fifty educational innovations that occurred in the past 100 years. For each, please indicate on a sliding scale the impact of each on P-12 education. A *+10* means the innovation has had or will have an extremely positive and lasting impact on education, while a *-10* means the innovation has had or will have an extremely negative and lasting impact on education. If you are unaware of the innovation, please check the unaware box.

* Use of worksheets (mimeograph/ditto/Xerox) (beginning in the early 1900s)
* John Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* (1916)
* Founding of the American Federation of Teachers and teacher unions (AFT) (1916)
* Ability grouping/tracking/heterogeneous/homogenous (beginning in the early 1900s)
* Gifted Education movement (beginning early 1900s)
* Jean Piaget’s *The Child’s Conception of the World* (1929)
* Opaque projector (beginning in the early 20th century)
* Basal reader (Scott Foresman, Houghton Mifflin, Pearson, etc.) (1930-present)
* “Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children” (1939)
* G.I. Bill of Rights (1944)
* National School Lunch Act—free and reduced lunch (now includes breakfast) (1945)
* The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) (1926) and the ACT Test (1959)
* U.S. Supreme Court ruling Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and school desegregation
* New math movement (beginning in 1950s)
* National Defense Education Act (result of Sputnik) increase math and science majors (1958)
* Overhead projector (beginning in the 1960s)
* Lev Vygotsky “Zone of Proximal Development” (1962)
* Samuel Kirk coined the term “learning disabilities” (1963)
* Elementary and Secondary Education Act first passed—includes Title I “Improving the Academic Achievement of Disadvantaged” (1965)
* Project Head Start (1965)
* Jerome Bruner’s *Toward a Theory of Instruction* (1966)
* James S. Coleman’s report “Equality of Educational Opportunity” (1966)
* William Glasser’s *Reality Therapy* and *Schools Without Failure* (1967)
* National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—“Nation’s Report Card” (1969)
* Herbert R. Kohl’s *The Open Classroom* open concept schools (1969)
* Title IX of the Education Amendments of (1972)
* Rehabilitation Act Section 504 (1973)
* PL 94-142 “Education for All Handicapped Children Act” (1975) and PL 101-476 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1990)
* Year round school/balanced calendar school year (beginning in the 1970s)
* Introduction of Apple computers into the classroom—Apple IIe (1977)
* United States Department of Education created (1980)
* Computer Assisted Instruction/Learning/Education (beginning in the 1980s)
* Madeline Hunter’s *Mastery Teaching* and “Essential Elements of Instruction” (1982)
* John Goodlad’s *A Place Called School* (1984)
* Outcome-Based Education (OBE) (beginning in the 1980s)
* National Commission on Excellence in Education’s report “A Nation at Risk” (1983)
* Whole language movement (beginning in the mid 1980s)
* “America 2000” and “Goals 2000: Educate American Act” (1994)
* Broadband Internet (beginning in the 1990s)
* PowerPoint (beginning in the 1990s)
* Report of the National Reading Panel “Teaching Children to Read” (2000)
* School voucher movement (beginning in the 1990s)
* Smart Board is introduced by SMART Technologies (1991)
* Charter Schools—Minnesota opens first charter school (1992)
* Alternative routes to teacher certification/licensing (beginning in the 1990s)
* Charlotte Danielson’s *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* (1996)
* Massachusetts Education Reform Act requiring common curriculum and statewide tests (1993)
* The Higher Education Act amended requiring a report card for teacher preparation (Title II) (1998)
* Online/distance education (beginning late 1990s)
* Diane Ravitch *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms* (2000)
* STEM education movement (National Academies of Sciences) (2000s)
* “No Child Left Behind” ESEA and mandated state testing (2002)
* Common Core State Standards (2009)
* Teacher pay tied to evaluation and student achievement (2000s)
* Handheld computers devices and tablets (2000s)