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Why is education changing?

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When you look at what is taught in many classrooms in school today, it is different than in the past. Some topics such as probability and statistics in mathematics have a greater emphasis placed on them than in past years, and other topics, such as diagramming sentences in English class, have taken lesser roles or even been removed from the curriculum altogether. As a parent, I see that my children are learning different skills, or the same skills in seemingly different ways or at different ages than I did. I have heard some parents say that they can no longer help their child with a specific subject. These differences lead many to ask the question, "Why is education changing?"

Simply put, the content emphasized in education has changed because our world has changed and will continue to change. Some of the skills that were needed to ensure success 30, 20 or even 10 years ago are either no longer needed or the demand for those skills has reduced dramatically.

Research findings state that "Five years from now, over one-third of skills (35%) that are considered important in today's workforce will have changed." (<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>)

In addition to skill changes, today's student is expected to have several job and/or career changes during his/her working years. The new normal for millennials is to have four job changes in the first decade of work, and some of these include change to a different industry (<http://money.cnn.com/2016/04/12/news/economy/millennials-change-jobs-frequently/>). Students today must be prepared to continue to learn new skills throughout their lives and adapt to changes more than their parents or grandparents.

Because of these expected changes, the faculty of Prince recently began a long term staff development program to better prepare students for these changes. An important topic of this program is "rigor or depth of knowledge".

Rigor is not synonymous with difficulty. Rigor is determined by the kind of thinking that is required for a task. A task can be difficult (such as naming all the states and capitals, memorizing a list of Pythagorean triples, or reciting a poem) but not necessarily rigorous. The content on the television show Jeopardy could be considered difficult because questions are taken from a wide variety of subject areas. However, it is not rigorous because knowing the answers does not require deep reasoning.

Our faculty members are beginning a journey to improve our assessing skills in order to better equip students. In order to evaluate students' depth of knowledge, we will be learning what types of questions to ask to determine the level of understanding. We expect the change to be slow and gradual over the next 2-3 years, but the result will be better equipped students.

Solving complex problems and thinking critically are two skills expected to be in high demand not only now, but in the future. We believe that the program we have begun will give our faculty the skills needed to prepare our students for this changing society. Our goal is not to make classes more difficult. Our goal is to allow students to develop the thinking skills that God has given them so that they will be prepared for the world they will face. If the process of education does not change, then we should not expect the outcome of education to change.

"The only constant thing in life is change" seems to be more true at this time in history than at any other time. We thank you for allowing us to equip your child to be prepared for this change.

