

Chalkboard

By

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Cycles. Day and Night. The phases of the moon. The changing of the seasons. High tides, low tides, spring tides, neap tides. Carbon, oxygen, and nitrogen cycles. Rock cycles. Hydrology cycle. Geophysical cycles. Planetary cycles, Disease cycles. Life cycles of plants. Life cycles of animals.

I suspect the above listing only skims the surface of the waxing and waning of life on earth. It almost seems trivial to speak of the K-12 (preK-20?) school cycle to the above cycles. Yet, in some small way, education is a cycle; a system within a system within yet another system and so forth.

If one takes some time to look at the components of cycles it become readily apparent that there is a great interrelatedness between the functioning of cycles and their systems and other cycles and their systems. It does not take much thought to think of what could happen when parts of a system fails and how that failure could wreck havoc on the cycle to which that system belongs thus precipitating danger to other cycles and their systems.

Is education a cycle? Probably. Historians, social scientists, and philosophers can take up that debate as to whether things learned promote a renewal of resources within the human species.

I have older friends and acquaintances who talk to me of the old Gentry high school that once graced the campus where my office is now. They speak fondly of the times had there and the way of life in general of that period of time. They speak of staff now gone and of students who now are in their mid-60's. They speak of school buses with manual transmissions and of my office building being their cafeteria.

The old high school now longer exists. It was replaced first by what is now the Intermediate school and now by the buildings out on Pioneer Lane. Someday some other Gentry school superintendent will foster the construction of a new high school and the building cycle will continue. Such changes will require resources from outside the system; buildings are not self-renewing.

Some cycles need little apparent outside help to function. Day and night, the changing of the moon phases, and the four seasons all function without human

intervention and without being in much danger from *homo sapiens*. Yet man in his scientific prowess has the ability to toss an inadvertent monkey wrench into the clockworks of other cycles and their systems. Conversely, he also has the ability to understand on some level how cycles and systems work and to protect those systems so that life can continue until the Originator of all systems shuts the doors and turns off the lights.

If that be the case, then the cycle of education may better be thought of as a spiral rather than a circle. Each new crop of students has not only the past leanings to absorb but also the daily changing knowledge of the present. Changes in technology and in science means that the rudimentary skills of reading, writing, and “arithmic” must be a given for all students. It also means that education must understand that knowledge without application is a system malfunction.

Only a few days remain until the senior class of 2007 walks across the stage and out into the world to tackle its complex, interlocked, and diverse life systems and cycles. In some home, some almost 5-year old child waits to begin.