

Underfunded Schools Forced To Cut Past Tense From Language Programs

WASHINGTON—Faced with ongoing budget crises, underfunded schools nationwide are increasingly left with no option but to cut the past tense—a grammatical construction traditionally used to relate all actions, and states that have transpired at an earlier point in time—from their standard English and language arts programs.



A Chicago-area teacher begins the new past tense-free curriculum.

A part of American school curricula for more than 200 years, the past tense was deemed by school administrators to be too expensive to keep in primary and secondary education.

"This was by no means an easy decision, but teaching our students how to conjugate verbs in a way that would allow them to describe events that have already occurred is a luxury that we can no longer afford," Phoenix-area high-school principal Sam Pennock said. "With our current budget, the past tense must unfortunately become a thing of the past."

In the most dramatic display of the new trend yet, the Tennessee Department of Education decided Monday to remove "-ed" endings from all of the state's English classrooms, saving struggling schools an estimated \$3 million each year. Officials say they plan to slowly phase out the tense by first eliminating the past perfect; once students have adjusted to the change, the past progressive, the past continuous, the past perfect progressive, and the simple past will be cut. Hundreds of school districts across the country are expected to follow suit.

"This is the end of an era," said Alicia Reynolds, a school district director in Tuscaloosa, AL. "For some, reading and writing about things not immediately taking place was almost as much a part of school as history class and social studies."

"That is, until we were forced to drop history class and social studies a couple of months ago," Reynolds added.

Nevertheless, a number of educators are coming out against the cuts, claiming that the embattled verb tense, while outmoded, still plays an important role in the development of today's youth.

"Much like art and music, the past tense provides students with a unique and consistent outlet for self-expression," South Boston English teacher David Floen said. "Without it I fear many of our students will lack a number of important creative skills. Like being able to describe anything that happened earlier in the day."

Despite concerns that cutting the past-tense will prevent graduates from communicating effectively in the workplace, the home, the grocery store, church, and various other public spaces, a number of lawmakers, such as Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch, have welcomed the cuts as proof that the American school system is taking a more forward-thinking approach to education.

"Our tax dollars should be spent preparing our children for the future, not for what has already happened," Hatch said at a recent press conference. "It's about time we stopped wasting everyone's time with who 'did' what or 'went' where. The past tense is, by definition, outdated."

Said Hatch, "I can't even remember the last time I had to use it."

Past-tense instruction is only the latest school program to face the chopping block. School districts in California have been forced to cut addition and subtraction from their math departments, while nearly all high schools have reduced foreign language courses to only the most basic phrases, including "May I please use the bathroom?" and "No, I do not want to go to the beach with Maria and Juan." Some legislators are even calling for an end to teaching grammar itself, saying that in many inner-city school districts, where funding is most lacking, students rarely use grammar at all.

Regardless of the recent upheaval, students throughout the country are learning to accept, and even embrace, the change to their curriculum.

"At first I think the decision to drop the past tense from class is ridiculous, and I feel very upset by it," said David Keller, a seventh-grade student at Hampstead School in Fort Meyers, FL. "But now, it's almost like it never happens." ❏

Teen Uses Complete Words When Texting

Written by Bodhi LeBoeuf



No "LOL." for Miles

Racine, WI - In what appears to be a first since cell phone services began offering a 'texting' feature, a teenager has been found to have been sending messages composed of complete English words and sentences.

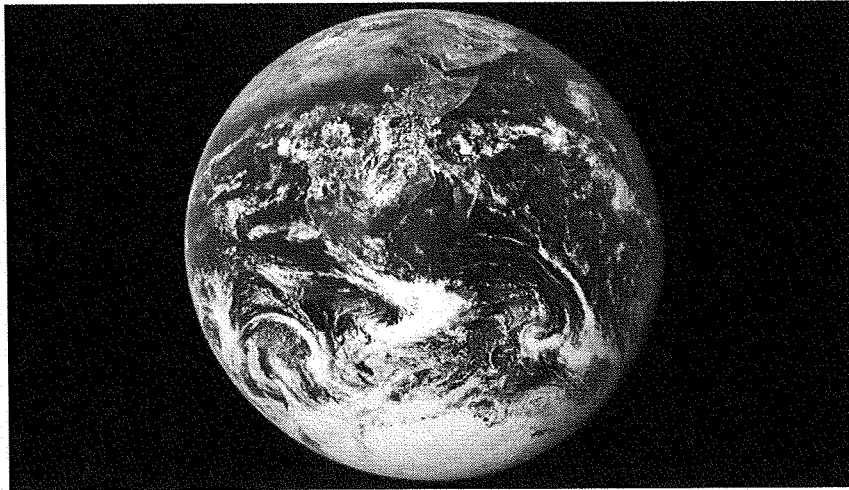
Racine sophomore Miles Darlington's unique behavior first came to the attention of locals after his parents happened to glance at the phone screen as their son was typing. "Of course, I was expecting to see 'POS' for 'parent over shoulder', as my daughter always types", says the boy's dad, William. "Instead, I swear, I see him typing 'My father is peering over my shoulder'". I was stunned, of course."

Miles's mother Emily has been no less shocked. "He and his friend had apparently been trading jokes and I just took a quick look to see what was so funny. When I saw 'Laughing out loud' on the screen, spelled correctly, I started to cry."

Currently, psychologists are without an explanation for the behavior. Whether the teen is a prodigy or merely a throwback to a more genteel age is an open question. For the moment, however, you can be sure that the family's cellular provider is very pleased.

Scientists Recommend Having Earth Put Down

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According to climatologists, putting the suffering Earth down now would be the humane thing to do.

FORT COLLINS, CO—Claiming that it is the humane thing to do, and that the planet is “just going to suffer” if kept alive any longer, members of the world’s scientific community recommended today that Earth be put down.

“We realize this isn’t the easiest thing to hear, but we’ve run a number of tests and unfortunately there’s really nothing more we can do for Earth at this point,” said leading climatologist Dr. Robert Wyche of Colorado State University’s Department of Atmospheric Science. “Earth’s ecosystems have hung in there for a while, and you have to hand it to the old gal for staying alive this long, but at this point the chances of a recovery are, I’m sorry to say, incredibly unlikely. It might be time to say goodbye.”

“Earth is in a lot of pain, folks,” Wyche continued. “Time to think about sending it off peacefully, for its own sake.”

While admitting that the prospect of saying goodbye to the terrestrial planet is very difficult, Wyche explained to reporters that letting nature take its course would only prolong the inevitable. Wyche also stressed that if Earth is not put down, humanity would ultimately be responsible for its continuing care, which would be “increasingly difficult as time goes on.”

Scientists reportedly also made several heartfelt assurances that the procedure would be quick and virtually painless.

“We understand that you’ve all become very attached to Earth over the years, and it’s hard to let go of something you love like this, but the fact is that no matter what, it simply won’t be able to keep going for much longer,” said Wyche, adding that there would be no guarantees regarding Earth’s already substandard quality of life if it is not put down in the immediate future. “Look, at the end of the day, Earth

is 4.5 billion years old and had a great life. The last thing you want to do is wait and draw this difficult ordeal out any further.”

“Granted, this is a very tough decision, so if you need more time to think about it or discuss it amongst yourselves, that’s totally understandable,” Wyche added. “But just be aware that the longer you wait, the more pain Earth will ultimately endure.”

Reportedly sensing some hesitancy on the part of humanity, Wyche then reiterated that very little can be done to prevent or counteract the myriad of maladies currently plaguing Earth, and that putting down the planet would in fact be the caring thing to do at this juncture.

“To be honest, there is a chance that had we taken more drastic steps earlier, Earth would have been able to survive for longer—much, much longer, even,” Wyche said. “But unfortunately, that is now a moot point. Right now, you should just cherish the good times you and Earth had together and give it a gentle and merciful send-off.”

“It’s your choice, though,” Wyche added. “So, you know, take your time.”

At press time, scientists had given humanity a few private moments to say goodbye before finally putting Earth out of its misery. @

Facebook: 'We Will Make Our Product Worse, You Will Be Upset, And Then You Will Live With It'

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MENLO PARK, CA—In a statement released to its 1.1 billion users, social media site Facebook announced Wednesday that the company will continue to make bad changes to its product, that members will be very upset with these changes, and that said members will then just have to learn to live with these changes. "Here's what's going to happen: Facebook will introduce a bunch of new features to the site that everyone will hate and that will make your experience worse, you will complain about it, and then you will realize you are utterly powerless to do anything about these new features, at which point you will move on and continue to use our product every single day," Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg told reporters, adding that users will voice their dissatisfaction via a post or two on their timelines and then gradually let it go and return to using the site as usual, because "that's the way this is gonna go." "This exact same scenario will repeat itself six months from now, and then a year from now, and then a year and a half from now, and so on and so forth, that's the deal, get used to it, talk to you later." Facebook officials added that any users who strongly disagree with their policy should feel free to deactivate their accounts and reactivate them two days later. ☹