

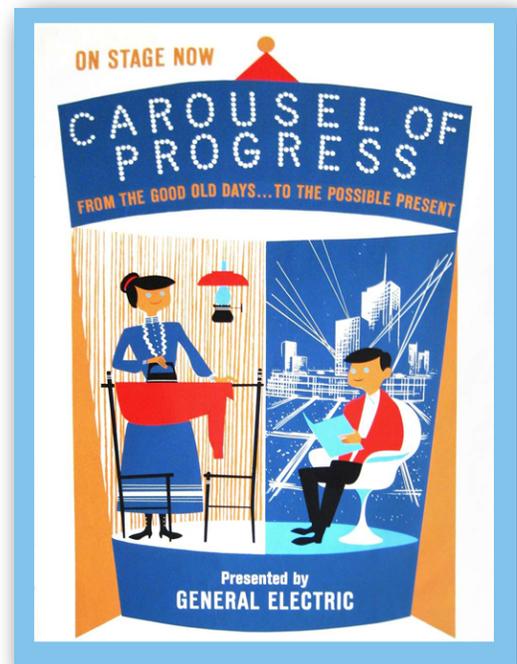


A Carousel of Progress

You might guess the longest running stage show in the country takes place on Broadway in New York City, but that distinction belongs to an animatronic exhibit created by Walt Disney for the 1964 World's Fair. The show now runs hundreds of times a daily in the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World. The attraction, [A Carousel of Progress](#), is housed in a circular theatre tucked away in a corner of Tomorrowland. Disney created the show to highlight technological innovations that changed the lives of the American family. It follows an audio-animatronic family through four periods: 1904, the late 1920s, the 1940s and finally, the modern era.

Why is the ride so popular? How has it lasted for so many years? Why do parents who viewed it dozens of times as children make a point to see with their own kids? Simply put, A Carousel of Progress is a story of the promise of tomorrow. It is the quintessential inspirational story of how dreaming and doing have made our lives better from one generation to the next.

Imagine yourself sitting in the rotating theatre seats as the curtain opens revealing a scene from Valentine's Day in 1904 allowing you to see a world you have only read about. Shortly thereafter your theatre seat rotates a few feet to the left, and you skip ahead to the July 4th celebration in the 1920s. Gas lamps had been replaced by electric lights. The radio and sewing machine are now a part of the family's daily life. Again, the seats rotate to the left and you are in the 1940s during Halloween. Now you see how new inventions such as the television and dishwasher, things you take for granted, dramatically impact the family's life. The fourth and final scene depicts a family celebrating Christmas in



the current era. Over the years the “current era” has changed from the 60s to the 80s and beyond, but the theme is the same. It reveals technologies on the cutting edge, such as a voice activated oven and virtual reality gaming, and shows the audience things just on the brink of coming into their homes.

Between each scene in the 20 minute show the father raves about how the new innovations have dramatically improved life for his family. As a transition between each scene and again at the end of the show the audio-animatronic characters sing “A Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow.” Even the lyrics of the theme song inspire guests to think about the progress we have made and the progress before us.

[“A Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow”](#)

*There's a great, big, beautiful tomorrow
Shining at the end of every day
There's a great, big, beautiful tomorrow
And tomorrow's just a dream away*

*Man has a dream and that's the start
He follows his dream with mind and heart
And when it becomes a reality
It's a dream come true for you and me*

*So there's a great, big, beautiful tomorrow
Shining at the end of every day
There's a great, big, beautiful tomorrow
Just a dream away*

Through New Eyes

Recently, the administrative team from Eminence traveled to Walt Disney World to take part in the [Disney Institute for Creativity and Innovation](#). We were there gathering insights from Disney to apply to our quest to reinvent school. In the down time between the Disney Institute sessions we made certain to find time to run over to the Magic Kingdom and revisit our favorite attraction for inspiration. It never hurts to remind ourselves that “tomorrow is just a dream away” or that the dream is just a start. We have to follow our dream “with mind and heart.” While the theme song of the ride has



become the unofficial theme song of the Eminence Blue Sky sessions, viewing the show with our team led to a somber reality. What if instead of highlighting technological advances in the American home guests rotated through four eras of the American public school system? How much progress would we see from the turn of the century to the modern era?

Certainly, the clothing and hairstyles would change just as they do in Disney's attraction, but

what else? The classrooms would shift from one room school houses to larger collections of one room school houses in the same large building. We'd see blackboards turn to whiteboards and chalk to dry erase markers. We might hear the narrator discuss more and more accountability measures. I can envision the final scene showing the promise of more technology coming into the classroom...in the future.

More frightening is what would not change throughout each era. From the turn of the century on through the 40s and beyond the audience would watch kids of like ages and different abilities sitting in rows listening to the same lecture. As [Ken Robinson notes](#), the Industrial model of schools set up in the 1900s is still in place today despite the fact that the mission of schools has changed. Though we are no longer preparing kids primarily to work in factories, we continue to school them with an assembly line process deeply rooted in an antiquated mission.

Just a Dream Away

American schools cannot continue down the same path, making minor, incremental changes from era to era. We must re-imagine how we educate children. Eminence would like to create a “great big beautiful tomorrow” for students through an innovative redesign of school as we know it. The next scene on Eminence’s “Carousel of Progress” will focus on completely personalizing the learning choices for students to shape their own pathway to graduation and beyond. Eminence Independent Schools will serve as Kentucky’s most innovative attraction. Like the guests visiting Disney’s “A Carousel of Progress”, visitors to Eminence Independent Schools will not be able to rationalize going back to the way things were done in the previous era because the progress that has been made will have dramatically improved the way things are done.

Eminence desires to become the spark that will inspire districts across the state to take risks and re-imagine school. The launch of the School on F.I.R.E. in May of 2012 was a great beginning toward realizing this goal, but it was only the beginning. In the subsequent pages, you will see the outline of Eminence’s plan to become Kentucky’s model district of innovation. We hope that you will partner with us in creating “a great big beautiful tomorrow” for all of Kentucky’s students.