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“Can you believe they put a man on the moon?” The Apollo Program. (3)

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THE IMPACT OF THE APOLLO SPACE PROGRAM ON INSPIRING THE FUTURE AEROSPACE
WORKFORCE

Abstract

During the time of the Apollo program the US government needed a workforce that could bring cutting-edge technological innovation to their lacking Aerospace industry in order to compete with the scientific accomplishments of other countries. Not only was there a need for such a competent workforce, but there was also a need to ensure its continuation through public education.

The launch of Sputnik on October 4th, 1957 not only made Americans aware of the fact that they were behind technologically, but also inspired various political and societal efforts with the end goal of reforming science education as a means of closing this knowledge gap.

President Eisenhower set the national tone for supporting science-based education programs at this time by passing several pieces of legislation, including the National Defense Education Act. Extensive media coverage of the Apollo program captivated viewers, causing the public to place higher value on Aerospace. These stories also allowed the public to recognize that the achievements of this program would improve their quality of life, subsequently fueling a large shift of interest, especially among K-12 students, to the sciences following the landing of man on the moon on July 20th, 1969. Synergizing with these changes, educators worked to reformat their curricula, lessons, standards, and other components involved in the operation of an American science classroom to increase their effectiveness in inspiring and educating students.

The goal of improving and sustaining the American Aerospace workforce has resurfaced today, as industry veterans are retiring, leaving new, unprecedented challenges for the next generation to address. Both state and federal-level policymakers can benefit from analysis of the US government’s past legislation by using it to not only improve today’s Aerospace workforce, but also to satisfy demands among their constituency. Science educators can use practices discussed, created during the Apollo program, to help realign their lessons with current space achievements to better inspire 21st century students. Space exploration can work for us now as Apollo worked back then by giving students the education and inspiration required to take larger steps, preparing for our next giant leap into the depths of the ever-expanding unknown.