

Hello, and welcome once again to “As It Is”, our daily show for people learning everyday American English.

I’m Avi Arditti in Washington.

Today on the program, we tell about a survey of middle and high school teachers in the United States that shows the pluses and minuses of the Internet as a research tool.

“It’s just a lot to learn about how to discern credible sources. And it’s something that really has to be taught and paid attention to.”

Then, we go back 49 years to July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1964, the day President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Civil Rights Act, barring many forms of racial discrimination.

“We can understand without rancor or hatred how this all happened, but it cannot continue.”

But first, we follow President Obama on a recent visit to a different kind of American high school...

An unusual high school in Texas recently welcomed a special visitor. The visit was part of what the White House called a “Middle Class Jobs and Opportunity Tour.”

VOA's Bob Doughty reports.

Manor New Technology High School seeks to help prepare students to meet the increasing demand for technology workers. The school has gained national recognition for its program. It focuses less on teacher lectures and more on student projects in so-called STEM subjects: science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Most of the teachers who helped start the school six years ago were graduates of a program called UTeach at the University of Texas in Austin. They are still working at the high school today.

Lawrence Abraham is one of the directors of the UTeach program. He praises the program and the teachers at Manor New Technology High School.

“They put together the curriculum, which has elevated this school, among all the schools in the new tech network around the country to be the premier site. And we think it is sort of the marriage of the UTeach program, which prepares teachers and encourages teachers to teach in a project-based way, with the new tech curriculum model, which is designed to incorporate that.”

Manor New Technology has 332 students. Sixty-eight percent are from ethnic or racial minorities. Fifty-two percent are from poor families. The Texas school sent 97 percent of its graduates to college in 2011 and all of its graduates in 2012.

Most schools, however, do not have the financial support that Manor New Technology receives. It gets help from private organizations and state and federal funding.

Technology schools are sometimes criticized for not paying enough attention to the arts and social sciences -- subjects like psychology and anthropology. University of Texas history professor Jeremi Suri says the goal of education goes beyond preparation for employment.

“Obviously science and math literacy are crucial. But democratic citizenship requires that people have a sense of our historical background as a society, a sense of how our society functions and an understanding of what democracy looks like in theory and in practice.”

Professor Suri says today, more than ever, workplace success depends on good communication and an ability to work well with others as a team.

I’m Bob Doughty.

Teachers say the digital age has had a good influence -- and a not-so-good influence -- on this generation of American teenagers. More than 2,000 middle and high school teachers took an online survey. Researchers also spoke with teachers in focus groups.

VOA’s Faith Lapidus reports.

Three-quarters of the teachers said the Internet and digital search tools have had a “mostly positive” effect on their students’ research habits and skills. But 87 percent agreed that these technologies are creating an “easily distracted generation with short attention spans.” And 64 percent said the technologies “do more to distract students than to help them academically.” Many students think “doing research” now means just doing a quick search on Google.

The Pew Internet Project did the survey with the College Board and the National Writing Project. A majority of the teachers came from Advanced Placement classes, which provide college-level work for high school students.

Judy Buchanan is deputy director of the National Writing Project and a co-author of the report. Ms. Buchanan says digital research tools are helping students learn more, and learn faster.

“Teachers really embrace these tools because they are ways to make some of learning exciting and engaging. Young people embrace these tools. And the goal is to really help them become creators of content, and meaningful content, and not just sort of consumers.”

But one problem the survey found is that many students are lacking in digital literacy. In other words, they trust too much of the information they find on the Internet. Judy Buchanan says these students have not developed the skills they need to judge the quality of online information.

“It’s just a lot to learn about how to discern credible sources. And it’s something that really has to be taught and paid attention to. It’s like everything else -- in a world in which things can

happen quickly, you really do need to have a way to step back, reflect and analyze the information you have. And teachers can do a lot to teach that.”

I’m Faith Lapidus.

On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1964 -- 49 years ago -- President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the most-powerful civil-rights legislation in the nation’s history. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 barred racial discrimination in most private businesses, in voter registration, and in any program that receives federal tax money. The new law also permitted the Justice Department to seek court orders to desegregate public centers including swimming pools, parks and libraries.

President Johnson said racial prejudice was preventing all Americans from enjoying the blessings of liberty.

“We can understand without rancor or hatred how this all happened, but it cannot continue. Our Constitution, the foundation of our republic, forbids it, the principles of our freedom forbid it, morality forbids it, and the law I will sign tonight forbids it.”

President Johnson had strongly urged the Congress to approve the law to honor the memory of President John Kennedy, who had introduced the proposal in 1963. President Kennedy was assassinated later that same year.

President Johnson later said signing the 1964 Civil Rights Act was one of the proudest moments of his presidency.

We hope you enjoyed our program today. And we hope it helped you learn everyday American English.

I'm Avi Arditti, and that's "As It Is" on The Voice of America.