CHAPTER 2

Your Philosophy of Education

> Men are by no means agreed about the things to be taught, whether we aim at virtue or the best in life. Neither is it clear whether education should be more concerned with intellectual or moral virtue. Existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principle we should proceed . . . about method there is no agreement; for different persons, starting with different ideas about the nature of virtue, naturally disagree about the practice of it.
>
> ARISTOTLE

In Chapter 1, you looked at qualities of effective teachers and effective teaching. You examined these attributes from several perspectives: your own thoughts and feelings, the ideas of classmates and other preservice teachers, the media, educational research, educational psychologists, and professional associations. After considering this new information and using it to augment your own initial ideas, you developed a list of the most important attributes you believe characterize effective teachers.

Your work in Chapter 1 may have left you with the impression that all teachers should have the same qualities and should teach in the same way if they are to achieve excellence. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Doubtless, there are areas where your thoughts about teaching excellence are decidedly different from those of others, even though you may agree in principle on the qualities that characterize effective teachers. These thoughts are based in large measure on your beliefs and predispositions. Can you see the perplexity of the educational questions that concerned Aristotle in the opening quote?

Your beliefs and predispositions about teaching and education have a profound impact on how you teach and what you teach, just as your beliefs and predispositions about living have a profound impact on how you live your life. As human beings, we carry beliefs from tradition, experience, education, religion, and socialization, and we revise and refine them through experience. Over time, these beliefs become stronger as we find they serve us well and prove to be true for us. These beliefs ultimately become our philosophy of life.

The same can be said about teaching. You have current beliefs about which you are beginning to think and which you are beginning to modify in response to new experiences and your explorations of new information. What you know and come to believe about education will become stronger through

the experiences you will have in your teacher preparation program. Over time, you will learn more and more about education and will revise and refine your beliefs as a result of your experiences. These beliefs will form the basis of your ever-evolving philosophy of education.

There are many different philosophies in education that motivate the approaches exhibited by excellent teachers. In this chapter you will consider several prominent philosophies that guide American education and find where your current beliefs fit. You will examine your own philosophical beliefs, compare them with these basic philosophies of education, study the applications of these philosophies in schools, investigate prominent psychologies that seek to explain the mechanism of learning, and put all this together as you develop your own tentative philosophy of education that will guide your inquiries through the rest of this course.

CHAPTER GOALS

As a result of your work in this chapter, you will:

1. Describe the main branches of philosophy and how they relate to educational issues.
2. Categorize your beliefs about what is most important in education.
3. Investigate the nature of basic philosophies of education and your thoughts about each.
4. Describe the primary characteristics of humanist, behaviorist, information processing, and constructivist approaches to education.
5. Develop your personal preliminary philosophy of education.
6. Select a metaphor that represents your beliefs about the role of a teacher.

The Nature of Educational Philosophy

Let us eavesdrop on a conversation between two students who have just finished their explorations in Chapter 1 of this text.

> *"Sure," says one, "I agree that teachers should be respectful, listen to the kids, and show a sense of humor. But, that doesn't mean I am going to let them run my classroom. I am the authority, and I am going to run it my way."*
>
> *The other preservice teacher responds, "I agree that teachers should show respect to students, should listen to students, and should have a sense of humor. But if they are to learn anything at all, they have to have a say-so about what goes on in the classroom."*

Here are two people with the same thoughts about the qualities of effective teachers but opposite thoughts about how to run the classroom. One believes teachers must have total control of the classroom if students are to learn; the other believes teachers must allow students to have a great deal of input into what goes on in the classroom if they are to learn.

These two people differ fundamentally in their beliefs about the most effective practices in the classroom. They have different views about human beings and human nature, and they have different beliefs and concepts about how people learn, especially in schools. In short, they have different philosophies of education.

What Is Philosophy?

The word *philosophy* comes from two Greek words *philos,* which means "love," and *sophy,* which means "wisdom." Literally speaking, then, *philosophy* means "love of wisdom." In common use, *philosophy* refers to the general beliefs, concepts, and attitudes possessed by an individual or group. You have a philosophy of life that consists of a set of general beliefs, concepts, and attitudes about life, and you probably have a philosophy of education in which you have a set of general beliefs, concepts, and attitudes about education.

Throughout history, people have struggled to find answers to fundamental questions such as:

- What is real?
- What do we know?
- How do we know what we know?
- What is of value?
- What is logical?
- What is beautiful?
- What is right? What is wrong?

There are many complex and elusive questions about life, education, and other areas of our existence that are similar to these questions. There are also many different, complex, and elusive answers to these questions. The study of these kinds of questions is the substance of philosophy.

Branches of Philosophy

To facilitate the studies of these kinds of questions, philosophy has been arranged into several branches, each addressing different, but related, questions. The chief branches are **metaphysics, epistemology, axiology,** and **logic** (see Figure 2.1).

Metaphysics

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that addresses questions of reality. Metaphysics is concerned with such philosophical questions as:

- What is reality?
- Are people basically good or bad?
- What is the nature of the world in which we live?
- What is the nature of being and of reality? (a branch of metaphysics called **ontology**)
- What is the origin and what is the structure of the universe? (a branch of metaphysics called **cosmology**)
- What or who is God? What are the relations among God, humankind, and the universe? (a branch of metaphysics called **theology**)

In classrooms, teachers invoke metaphysical issues regularly when they make decisions about what they should teach on any particular day, how they should organize the classroom to facilitate maximum learning, and what motivational strategies they should use. Several metaphysical questions related to educational situations are shown in Figure 2.1.

Branch of Philosophy		Chief Topic	Questions Related to Education
Metaphysics	Ontology	Reality	• What is knowledge? • Are students basically capable people or incapable people? • How does our view of knowledge determine what should be taught?
	Cosmology	The Universe	• How orderly should my classroom be? • Should the curriculum be structured or determined by students? • Should I teach the theory of evolution or creationism? • What texts should I use as authoritative?
	Theology	God	• Is it possible to motivate all students to want to learn? • Is a student's ability to learn innate or acquired? • Should all people have the same access to education?
Epistemology		Knowledge	• Should teachers lecture, ask questions, provide experiences, or encourage activities to enable students to learn? • How do scientists do science?
Axiology		Values Ethics Aesthetics	• Are students basically good or bad? • How should I treat students? • How should students treat others and me? • Should my behavior management system be punitive or encouraging? • What different understandings of "beautiful" might there be in my classroom? • What values should be taught in character education? • What is the importance of art education and music education in schools?
Logic		Reasoning	• Should I use deductive or inductive reasoning in my lessons? • How can I understand the ways my students are reasoning?

Figure 2.1
Branches of Philosophy and Representative Educational Questions Associated with Each.

Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and how we come to know. This branch of philosophy seeks to answer several basic questions, such as:

- What is knowledge?
- What is truth?
- Where did knowledge originate?
- How do we come to know?
- How do we learn?

As you can imagine, much of your teacher preparation program will deal with epistemological topics. For educators, epistemology (the nature of knowledge and learning)

and its cousin, **pedagogy** (ways of teaching), are the primary areas of concern. These are the teacher's profession. A few education-related questions that deal with epistemological ideas are shown in Figure 2.1.

Axiology

Axiology is the branch of philosophy that deals with values. Axiology seeks to answer such questions as:

- What is of value?
- What values are essential?
- What is morality? Is morality defined by our actions or our thoughts? (a branch of axiology called *ethics*)
- What is beauty? (a branch of axiology called *aesthetics*)
- What is beautiful?

Axiology addresses our thinking about what teacher-student interactions should be and how teachers should behave toward students. As you will learn, according to Abraham Maslow, axiology also addresses one of the basic needs of human beings—the need for aesthetic satisfaction. A few education-related questions dealing with axiological concerns are shown in Figure 2.1.

Logic

What characteristics of this text make it inductive in approach rather than deductive?

Logic is the branch of philosophy that deals with reasoning. There are two basic types of reasoning: **deductive reasoning** and **inductive reasoning.** In *deductive* reasoning, thinking proceeds from the most general concepts to the most specific examples. In *inductive* reasoning, thinking proceeds from the most specific examples to the most general concepts; generalizations are derived from the specific examples (see Figure 2.2).

As you may have observed, this entire text uses an inductive approach.

The following sets illustrate deductive and inductive reasoning.

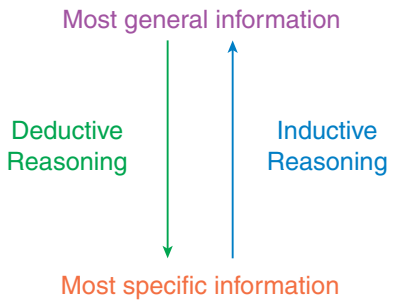


Figure 2.2
Deductive versus Inductive Reasoning.

Deductive reasoning	*Inductive reasoning*
All humans are mortal.	I am mortal.
I am human.	You are mortal.
Therefore I am mortal.	We are humans.
	Therefore humans are mortal.

A famous puzzle in deductive logic, "Who Owns the Zebra?" was published by *Life* magazine in 1962. You can access this puzzle through the direct link available on the *Building Teachers* companion website.

A few education-related questions dealing with concerns of logic are shown in Figure 2.1.

Educational Philosophy

Whereas general philosophy seeks to answer questions about metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, and logic, educational philosophies extend to questions about the general beliefs, concepts, and attitudes people have about education. You have already looked at

some general philosophical questions as they apply to education. In this chapter, we narrow our focus to six basic questions:

- What should be taught?
- Who should decide what should be taught?
- Why should this material be taught?
- How should this material be taught?
- What should the teacher's role be?
- What should the student's role be?

There are many possible answers to these questions. The answers differ according to who is considering the questions and what that person's beliefs are. They differ from one historical time period to another, from region to region, and among different kinds of schools, such as public, private, parochial, charter schools, and home schools. They change as the cultural makeup of our country becomes increasingly diversified.

What are *your* responses to these questions? You probably have some initial thoughts and ideas based on your beliefs and your past experiences. These thoughts represent the beginnings of your philosophy of education.

Your Personal Beliefs about Education

To help you move toward finding your own personal niche in the world of educational philosophy, let us start with an examination of your personal beliefs about what is important and what is not important in education.

BUILDING BLOCK 2.1

Characteristics of Educational Philosophies

Study the statements in each of the following groups and circle the numbers of the statements with which you agree. Then consider the questions that follow the final group.

GROUP I

1. The most important knowledge for students to learn in school are the profound truths discovered and developed in the past.
2. Above all, schools should develop students' abilities to think deeply, analytically, and creatively.
3. Drill and acquisition of factual knowledge are very important components of the learning environment.
4. There is certain basic information that everyone must know.
5. When it comes to knowledge, the teacher is the most authoritative person in the classroom.
6. Students should study great works that have been validated by society over time.
7. Students should focus primarily on learning the knowledge and insights their teachers impart.
8. The teacher should be a strong authority figure in the classroom.
9. Ideal teachers present knowledge to students and interpret it for them to ensure that they understand it correctly.
10. The curriculum in a given grade or subject should be the same for everyone.

GROUP II

1. The student is the receiver of knowledge.
2. The curriculum of schools should center on the basic subjects of reading, writing, history, mathematics, and science.
3. Students should not be promoted from one grade to the next until they have mastered certain key material.
4. Recitation and demonstration of acquired knowledge are essential components of learning.
5. The curriculum of a school should consist primarily of the skills and subjects that are essential for all students to know.

6. Schools should reflect the social and economic needs of the society they serve.
7. Lecture-discussion is the most effective teaching technique.
8. Memorization, drill, and practice are the keys to learning skills.
9. Teaching by subject area is the most effective approach.
10. Effective classrooms are quiet and orderly.

GROUP III

1. Schools should prepare students for analyzing and solving the types of problems they will face outside the classroom.
2. New material is best taught through facilitating students in their own investigations.
3. Teachers must stress the relevance of what students are learning to their lives outside, as well as inside, the classroom.
4. Many students learn best by engaging in real-world activities rather than by reading.
5. Art lessons should focus primarily on individual expression and creativity.
6. Students should be active participants in the learning process.
7. The curriculum of a school should be built around the personal experiences and needs of students.
8. Teachers should be seen as facilitators of learning.
9. Students should have substantial input into the curriculum being studied.
10. Classrooms should have areas for large group discussion and small group inquiries.

GROUP IV

1. Students should be permitted to determine their own rules in the educational process.
2. Schools should offer students choices in what to study and when classes are held.
3. Ideal teachers are constant questioners.
4. Effective learning can be unstructured, informal, and open.
5. The purpose of the school is to help students understand and define themselves and find the meaning of their existence.
6. It is more important for a student to develop a positive self-concept than to learn specific subject matter.
7. Students should be permitted to determine their own curriculum.
8. The ideal teacher helps students identify their most effective methods of study.
9. The furniture in the classroom should be movable by both students and teachers to meet multiple and flexible purposes.
10. Teachers function as facilitators and resource persons rather than as instructors.

GROUP V

1. Schools should foster change through orderly means when dealing with controversial issues.
2. Schools must place more emphasis on teaching about the concerns of minorities and women.
3. The United States must become more cooperative economically with countries such as Japan, China, and Mexico, and schools have an obligation to provide the education students need to facilitate such change.
4. Schools should plan substantial social interactions in their curriculum.
5. The primary aim of schools is to prepare students to accomplish social reform.
6. Education should focus on injustices and inequities in society and ways of solving these difficulties.
7. Teachers should be committed to achieving a new social order.
8. Students should learn to identify problems and situations that affect society.
9. Students should focus on community building in their classes rather than obedience of the teacher's directions.
10. Community service and involvement with community projects are essential components of education.

Each group represents a particular philosophy of education—a set of beliefs, concepts, and attitudes about what should happen in schools. Different philosophies contend that education ought to be handled in ways that are markedly different from the contentions of other philosophies.

These five philosophies of education are the primary sets of educational beliefs that govern education in the United States. Although many other philosophies of ed-

ucation exist and many philosophies originate from non-European roots, the five presented here represent the mainstream of American thinking about education.

- Is there a group in which you agreed with all or most statements? Which one?
- Is there a group in which you disagreed with all or most statements? Which one?
- In which group or groups did you agree with some of the statements and disagree with others?
- If you had to select only one group that represents your beliefs about education, which would it be? What is its name?

Schools of Philosophic Thought

In Building Block 2.1, group I contains statements with which *perennialists* strongly agree. Group II contains statements with which *essentialists* strongly agree. Group III contains statements with which *progressivists* strongly agree. Group IV contains statements with which *existentialists* strongly agree. Group V contains statements with which *social reconstructionists* strongly agree.

From this activity, you can identify one or more labels for your philosophic thoughts. Does any one of the philosophies represent your personal beliefs completely?

Let us examine these five philosophies in a bit more detail. While you are doing this, compare the inventory you took in Building Block 2.1 with the discussions of each philosophy. Ask yourself where you agree and where you disagree. In this manner, you can interpret your thoughts about educational philosophies and you can judge whether your label or labels are well suited.

BUILDING BLOCK 2.2

Exploring Educational Philosophies

In this Building Block, you will become better acquainted with the major philosophies of education. Answer the six questions we raised earlier for each philosophy shown in the table below. Use your exploration of philosophies in Building Block 2.1 and your current understandings of what should occur in schools to help you in your thinking.

What are the root words for the terms *perennialism, essentialism, existentialism,* and *social reconstructionism?*

Based on the root words for each of the four philosophies, what inferences can you make about the following questions?

	Perennialism	Essentialism	Progressivism	Existentialism	Social Reconstructionism
What should be taught?					
Who should decide what is taught?					
Why should this material be taught?					
How should this material be taught?					

	Perennialism	Essentialism	Progressivism	Existentialism	Social Reconstructionism
What should the teacher's role be?					
What should the student's role be?					

Perennialism

As you doubtless have surmised, the root word of *perennialism* is "perennial." The philosophy of perennialism advances the idea that the focus of education should be the universal truths conveyed through the classic and profound thoughts and works that have lasted through the centuries and have recurred in each generation. Like a perennial plant that returns year after year, these thoughts and works are everlasting. They have withstood the test of time and are as important and relevant today as they were when first conceived. The enduring wisdom of the past is a guide to the present.

Examples of these classic materials include works of great literature, findings of great scientists, and timeless concepts of history. High school students study Shakespeare's plays, Homer's *Iliad,* Melville's *Moby Dick,* Newton's laws of motion, Einstein's theories, and other works that have become part of today's classic repertoire. Students take courses that focus on the traditional subjects of reading, writing, language, mathematics, science, history, and the arts. Elementary and middle school students prepare for more advanced work by studying basic subjects from the perspective of the classic tradition in a tightly controlled and well-disciplined atmosphere. The perennialist believes the emphasis of school should be the mastery of content and the development of reasoning skills in the arts and sciences and that thoughtful consideration of the classical works is the way these goals can be achieved.

Perennialists believe that truth does not depend on time or place but rather is the same for all people. They believe the same curriculum should be required of all students. Their reasoning is twofold: (1) Because the goal of school is to teach the truth, and the truth is the same for everyone, the curriculum must be the same. (2) Because people are born equal and have the same opportunities, to give some students a curriculum that is different from that of others is to treat them differently and is a form of discrimination.

Who decides what should be taught? Society at large makes these decisions because it is society that has validated the importance of these works over time and has continued to hold these classics in high esteem. Many individuals have assembled canons of material they believe should be taught. Noteworthy is Mortimer Adler, whose 1982 work *The Paideia Proposal* describes a system of education based on the classics. His book has led to the development of an innovative school model called the Paideia (pronounced py-DEE-a) program, which several hundred schools in all grade levels throughout the United States have adopted. The Paideia program calls for all students to study a single rigorous curriculum in which the only elective is foreign language. Teachers in the program use three basic methods of teaching: (1) didactic teaching in which the teacher lectures (10% to 15% of the time), (2) Socratic seminars in which the teacher uses directed questioning to help students arrive at desirable answers (15% to 20% of the time), and (3) coaching in which the teacher coaches students in the academic subjects (60% to 70% of the time) (Brandt & Voke, 2002; National Paideia Center, 2005).

How is the Socratic method of questioning used in schools today?

The Socratic method is patterned after the way Socrates taught. He believed people were born with all the information they need in life and that all people were born with the same basic information. This information was already present at birth, but it was

hidden. He believed that through skillful question and discussion sessions with students, he was able to get his students to bring this hidden information to the surface.

In the 1930s, Adler and Robert Maynard Hutchins, then president of the University of Chicago, organized the classics into a set of more than 400 works titled *Great Books of the Western World* (1952), which they believed would enable students to become independent and critical thinkers. They held that people can discover the truths through their senses and their reasoning—that they do not construct truths because they are already in existence. The *Great Books of the Western World* represent the fruit of these discoveries made by other people; as students read and discuss them, they, too, can encounter the great truths of the universe.

Of course, because the perennialist believes the primary goal of school is for students to learn what others have created and to use this knowledge in their own lives, the teacher is expected to present this material to the students. There is little or no room for students to venture into tangents of their own interest; the curriculum must be covered. The teacher's role is to impart knowledge. To do this, teachers hold seminars, engage students in Socratic discussions, foster directed readings of great books, explain principles and concepts, and lecture as effectively as possible, presenting dynamic lessons with all the interest-grabbing devices available. The work is demanding, and the classroom is disciplined.

The student's role is to discuss, examine, and reexamine the information presented by the teacher with the ultimate goal of learning the content.

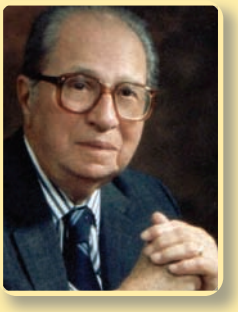
Links to the National Paideia Center website, a Mortimer Adler biography, and sites about Adler's work are available on the *Building Teachers* companion website.

Have you taken a course in classic literature or philosophy? How did the requirements of this course reflect the arguments of Adler?

ImageState/Alamy

Of the five philosophies of education—perennialism, essentialism, existentialism, progressivism, or social reconstructionism—which is demonstrated in this elementary classroom?

BIOGRAPHY



© Center for the Study of The Great Ideas

Mortimer Jerome Adler

(1902–2001) was born in New York City, the son of an immigrant jewelry salesman. He dropped out of school at the age of 14 to become a copy boy for a New York newspaper, but hoping to become a journalist, he took courses in writing at Columbia University. While there, he became intensely interested in philosophy. He completed his course work but did not graduate because he had not completed the physical education requirement. He later earned his Ph.D. at Columbia. Adler served as a professor of psychology at Columbia during the 1920s, and he taught at the University of Chicago during the 1930s. At the University of Chicago, he advocated the adoption of the classics as a main part of the curriculum, although the rest of the faculty disagreed.

Adler believed in providing the same liberal education without electives or vocational classes for all people. He believed education should teach people (1) to think critically, (2) to use their leisure time well, (3) to earn their living ethically, and (4) to be responsible citizens in a democracy. He believed that people should become lifelong learners.

Mortimer Adler is best known in the education community for his devotion to the adoption of the classics as the mainstream of education, the Paideia schools, and his insistence that students read key works of Western literature and philosophy.

BUILDING BLOCK 2.3

Your Thoughts about Perennialism

- Review the statements in Building Block 2.1 associated with perennialism (group I). How well do these statements describe the perennialist philosophy of education?
- How did the inferences you made about perennialism in Building Block 2.2 compare with the description of this educational philosophy?
- What do you think are the strengths of perennialism as applied to education?
- What do you think are the weaknesses of perennialism as applied to education?

Essentialism

The philosophy of essentialism takes its name from the word *essential*. The essentialist believes there are certain basic or essential knowledge, skills, and understandings students should master. Essentialists assert that, over time, society has found that certain skills, such as reading, writing, computing, and, in today's world, computer skills, are needed for people to function effectively. Accordingly, certain subjects, such as the language arts, mathematics, science, history, and, in today's world, computer training, are essential for people to gain the knowledge and skills they need. According to the essentialist viewpoint, this knowledge and these skills will always be needed. Thus, we can say that society at large decides in general what these essentials are. Businesses, banks, manufacturers, retailers, and others provide input to the institutions of education, detailing the strengths and weaknesses they see in high school graduates. The educators, in turn, use this input to help them develop programs of study that will prepare students to enter the workforce. Because most of the people who provide input into the educational system are concerned with students mastering the basic skills of reading, writing, and basic mathematics (the "3 Rs"), the programs developed naturally reflect these concerns. Thus, essentialism can be termed the "Back to Basics" approach to education.

Essentialism has been the guiding philosophy of American education for a very long time. (You will consider this again in Chapter 10, when you investigate the history of American education.) The Soviet launching of Sputnik in October 1957 rekindled this thinking. The United States felt deeply humiliated by the Soviet success. American scientists had been working on launching an American spacecraft for a number of years. Americans asked, "How did this happen? How did the United States, with all its technological capabilities, all its talent, and all its money, not achieve the goal of being first in space?" As so often happens, education took much of the blame.

Two opposing views addressed the seeming weaknesses in American education. One advocated an increased emphasis on education in science, mathematics, and technology and an increase in inquiry teaching strategies. This thrust was strengthened by the Woods Hole Conference of 1959, chaired by Jerome Bruner and attended by scientists, mathematicians, psychologists, and technology specialists (Bruner, 1965). The conference affirmed the increasing momentum in science, mathematics, and technology education and called for studying less material but studying it in greater depth and requiring students to inquire and figure things out for themselves.

The other view was a growing concern that American students were not mastering the basic material of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and other areas. This concern was later highlighted in *A Nation at Risk,* the 1983 report of the President's Commission on Excellence in Education (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report essentially said that American children were at risk for lagging behind other nations in achievement of basic subjects and that we had better teach our children to read, write, and do mathematics—and we had better do it *now.* In 1998, the Center for Education Reform reaffirmed these findings in *A Nation Still at Risk*. These same concerns are the chief underliers of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (*The No Child Left Behind Executive*

Summary, 2001). This wide support for a back-to-basics curriculum and the emphasis on basic subjects has eclipsed the recommendations made at the Woods Hole Conference.

In essentialist education, students receive instruction in the basic subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, foreign language, and technology. Unlike perennialism, which emphasizes a canon of great works and classics, essentialism emphasizes fundamental knowledge and skills that business and political leaders believe members of today's society need to know to be productive in the workplace.

Teachers transmit this essential knowledge and expect students to learn it. The teacher is considered the repository of knowledge to be transmitted. This means educators develop and employ a sequence of topics in each subject that progresses from less complex to more complex material through successive grade levels. It also means using lecture and recitation, discussion, drill and practice, and a variety of teaching and learning materials to ensure that students learn the content. For example, a middle grades social studies teacher might give a lecture on why large cities are located where they are, using maps and videos as aids, rather than having students investigate the phenomenon for themselves by engaging in map exploration activities.

The role of the students is to learn the content and skills being taught and to demonstrate their mastery of them on achievement tests, often in the form of standardized tests that are used to make local, regional, statewide, and national comparisons.

E. D. Hirsch, Jr., has written extensively on what should be included in essentialist education. His works include *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Turtleback Books, 1988), *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Houghton Mifflin, 1987), and *A First Dictionary of Cultural Literacy: What Our Children Need to Know* (Turtleback Books, 1991). In addition, he has published several volumes in his *Core Knowledge Series* that deal with what children in elementary grades should know (Hirsch, 1994–1999). Hirsch's work could be considered perennialist in nature except for its emphasis on science, which reflects the essentialist viewpoint.

Direct links to the full texts of *A Nation At Risk* and *The No Child Left Behind Executive Summary,* as well as a link to the Core Knowledge Foundation established by E. D. Hirsch, Jr., are available on the *Building Teachers* companion website.

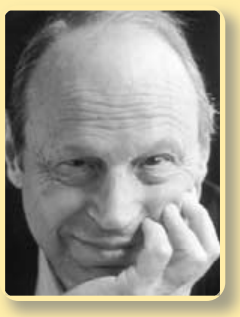
How important do you think it is to teach a basic core curriculum to all students?

BUILDING BLOCK 2.4

Your Thoughts about Essentialism

- Review the statements in Building Block 2.1 associated with essentialism (group II). How well do these statements describe the essentialist philosophy of education?
- How did the inferences you made about essentialism in Building Block 2.2 compare with the description of this educational philosophy?
- What do you think are the strengths of essentialism as applied to education?
- What do you think are the weaknesses of essentialism as applied to education?

BIOGRAPHY



Courtesy Hoover Institution

E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (b. 1928), is a prominent figure in the theories underlying essentialist education. He holds degrees from Cornell and Yale and is a professor of education and the humanities at the University of West Virginia. He is founder and chairman of the Core Knowledge Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the establishment of a curriculum of Core Knowledge, a sequenced body of knowledge recommended by the Foundation to be taught in preschool through eighth grade. The Foundation is a major source of research, theory, and practical lessons and assessments for all recommended subjects in pre-K–8 schools. Although his Core Knowledge schools operate nationwide, critics have challenged Hirsch's essentialist theories, contending that students who use the Core Knowledge curriculum are taught *what* to think rather than *how* to think and that the perspective is Eurocentric, giving only minor attention to non-Eurocentric influences.

Progressivism

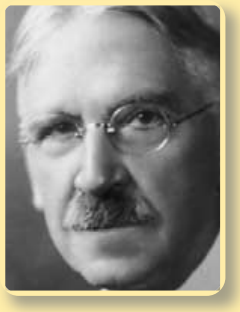
The educational philosophy of progressivism takes its name from the word *progressive*. The dictionary defines *progressive* as "making use of or interested in new ideas, findings, or opportunities" and ". . . an educational theory marked by emphasis on the individual child, informality of classroom procedure, and encouragement of self-expression" (Merriam-Webster, 2003). Thus, the philosophy of progressivism espouses the idea that the focus of education should be students rather than content and that whatever is taught should be meaningful. To the progressivist, the purpose of education is to prepare students to be lifelong learners in an ever-changing society.

One of the key figures in the progressivist movement was John Dewey. Dewey's writings and his work at the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago, where he tested and refined his educational ideas, have produced tremendous innovations in American education. To Dewey, the traditional school where students sat in rows and passively received information imparted by the teacher was ineffective. He argued that if students are to learn, they must be involved with real problems and meaningful questions, must solve problems according to a scientific method, must be free to develop their own theories and their own conceptualizations, and must be encouraged to test their conclusions in real situations. The progressivist movement focused on several basic principles*:

1. Students should be free to develop naturally.
2. Student interest should guide the teaching.
3. The teacher should be a guide, not a taskmaster.
4. Student development should involve the *whole* student, and should include physical, mental, moral, and social growth.
5. Schools should attend to the physical development of students.
6. There should be school-home cooperation to meet the needs of students realistically.

How does Dewey's philosophy of education compare with the constructivist view described in Chapter 0?

BIOGRAPHY



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Born on a farm near Burlington, Vermont, **John Dewey** (1859–1952) was arguably the most influential American educator in the 20th century. He graduated from the University of Vermont, and after 3 years of teaching, he earned his doctorate at Johns Hopkins University. Dewey taught philosophy at the University of Michigan and the University of Minnesota before becoming chair of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy at the University of Chicago. He developed the university's Laboratory School in 1896 and directed it for the next 7 years, pioneering experimental efforts and translating their results into practice. Because of disagreements with the university over the Laboratory School, Dewey left in 1904 to become a professor of philosophy at Columbia University.

In addition to his contributions in the areas of philosophy, psychology, politics, and social thought, Dewey was instrumental in developing modern education theory. His was a prominent voice in educational philosophy, with an emphasis on progressivism. He rejected authoritarian teaching methods and advocated the importance of experiential education—learning by doing. He also stressed the importance of the development of the person.

Dewey's ideas were adopted by the "progressivist education" movement, but they frequently were distorted, with the result that, contrary to Dewey's intentions, subject matter education was often neglected in favor of classroom entertainment or vocational education.

To some of Dewey's admirers, he was the greatest educator who ever lived. On the other hand, many attribute the "ills" of American education to the influence of his ideas. Whatever one believes about John Dewey, there is no mistaking the fact that he taught generations of students to examine ideas carefully and objectively before deciding on their own conclusions or course of action.

Several of Dewey's quotes are apropos:

- Anyone who has begun to think places some portion of the world in jeopardy.
- Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.
- Every great advance in science has issued from a new audacity of the imagination.

*From "The Principles of Education" stated by the Progressive Education Association in 1924; cited in Tyack, 1967, pp. 347–348.

Progressivists focus the curriculum on the needs of students. These needs include academic, social, and physical needs and are fueled by the interests of the students. Therefore, the material to be studied is determined jointly among the school, the teacher, and the students. Learning is considered a natural response to curiosity and the need to solve problems. In the progressivist school, teachers expose students to many new developments in science, technology, literature, and the arts to show that knowledge is constantly changing. Progressivists believe there are great ideas and thoughts of the past that students should study, but they also believe knowledge is changing and the job of students is to learn *how* to learn so that they can cope successfully with new challenges in life and discover what truths are relevant to the present.

Of prime importance is the idea that knowledge that is true in the present may not be true in the future. Costa and Liebman (1995) estimate that by the year 2020, the amount of knowledge in the world will double every 73 days. Not only is knowledge expected to grow exponentially, but new knowledge will replace old knowledge and old knowledge will become obsolete.

The progressivist teacher engages students in inquiries that the students themselves develop. Students learn from one another, so the progressivist classroom fosters social learning by having students working in cooperative groups. The progressivist teacher is a facilitator, a resource person, and a co-inquirer. The primary role of students is to develop new and deeper understandings continuously through their own investigation. Thus, in an elementary education progressivist mathematics class dealing with place value, we see children in small groups using various kinds of manipulatives to develop their own understandings of place value and helping each other clarify their ideas. The teacher facilitates these activities but does not lecture.

Which philosophy of education encourages active, hands-on learning, like using mathematics manipulatives in a math lesson—perennialism, essentialism, existentialism, progressivism, or social reconstructionism?

BUILDING BLOCK 2.5

Your Thoughts about Progressivism

- Review the statements in Building Block 2.1 associated with progressivism (group III). How well do these statements describe the progressivist philosophy of education?
- How did the inferences you made about progressivism in Building Block 2.2 compare with the description of this educational philosophy?
- What do you think are the strengths of progressivism as applied to education?
- What do you think are the weaknesses of progressivism as applied to education?

Existentialism

Existentialism focuses on the *existence* of the individual. Existentialists emphasize that people are responsible for defining themselves. To exist is to choose, and the choices people make define who they are. According to the existentialist point of view, people have two choices: they can either define themselves, or they can choose to be defined by others. The existentialist believes the only "truth" is the "truth" determined by the individual. Individuals determine for themselves what is meant by such terms as *right, wrong, beautiful, ugly, true, false,* and the like. The existentialist truly believes "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." The existentialist believes that, whereas the great thinkers of the past had their own ways of thinking about life and the natural world, their thoughts were uniquely theirs, and today's students need to find their own ways of thinking and develop their own conclusions.

In the existentialist classroom, students determine what they need to study, guided, of course, by the teacher. The idea is for students to come to their own understandings. Because every student is different, no single set of learning outcomes is appropriate for all students. Teachers and the school lay out the topics that are considered appropriate for the students at each grade level to study, and the students make their own meaningful choices.

The teacher is a facilitator, working with each student to help him or her find appropriate materials and the best methods of study. The teacher is a resource—one of many resources that also include other students, books, great works, contemporary works, the Internet and other technological resources, television programs, newspapers and magazines, and other people.

In the existentialist classroom, students do many different things and study many different topics at the same time. For example, in a science class, a group of three or four students might be dissecting a frog, using models, manuals, and drawings to guide their work; another group might be watching a video on the human circulatory system (using headphones); and yet another group might be recording the observations they had previously

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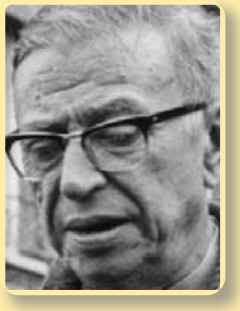


Jean Paul Sartre (1905–1980), a leader of existentialism, was born in Paris. After earning his doctorate, he taught philosophy in French high schools until he was drafted into the army at the start of World War II. He was captured by the Germans but escaped and became a leader in the resistance movement.

The philosophy of existentialism became very popular in Europe after the war. According to existentialism, we first exist and then we define ourselves through the choices we make. Sartre believed man's responsibility is vested in man, himself. People are entitled to be human with dignity, and a human is a human only when he or she is entirely free and accepts responsibility for this freedom. Sartre's basic premise was that life has no meaning or purpose except for the personal goals each person sets. This philosophy captured the attention of post–World War II Europeans who were yearning for freedom, and it is embraced today by people who believe they have the freedom to take responsibility for their own actions.

Although Sartre was principally a novelist, essayist, and playwright, his works captured the essence of his philosophy and have become the underpinnings of today's application of existentialism to education.

made of the night sky in chart form. The teacher moves from group to group, working to facilitate the investigations, probing for understandings, and challenging students' conclusions.

The role of the student is to pursue his or her investigations of the chosen topic until the desired learnings and understandings have taken place.

BUILDING BLOCK 2.6

Your Thoughts about Existentialism

- Review the statements in Building Block 2.1 associated with existentialism (group IV). How well do these statements describe the existentialist philosophy of education?
- How did the inferences you made about existentialism in Building Block 2.2 compare with the description of this educational philosophy?
- What do you think are the strengths of existentialism as applied to education?
- What do you think are the weaknesses of existentialism as applied to education?

Social Reconstructionism

Social reconstructionism is particularly germane in today's shrinking world. As its name suggests, the social reconstructionist philosophy of education asserts that society needs to be changed (reconstructed) and that schools are the ideal instrument to foster such changes. Social reconstructionists believe that world crises require the use of education to facilitate the development of a new social order, one that is truly democratic in nature. Schools are seen as agents of the reformation of society rather than as transmitters of knowledge.

To this end, teachers help their students understand the validity and urgency of social problems. The determination of which of the many important and controversial social problems should be studied is made through democratic consensus of the students under the leadership of the teacher. There is an abundance of social problems at the local, national, and global levels that can be the focus of the curriculum. Examples include violence, hunger, poverty, terrorism, inflation, inequality, racism, sexism, homophobia, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), pollution, homelessness, substance abuse, and many others. In social reconstructionism, the students select the social priorities to be studied and decide on the educational objectives to be attained from the study. The curriculum integrates all the traditional subjects into single thematic interdisciplinary units. The students and teacher work together to uncover, solve, and propose solutions to the selected problems. The teacher helps students explore the problems, suggests alternative perspectives, and facilitates student analysis and conclusion formation. Throughout the study, the teacher models the democratic process. Teaching methodologies include simulation, role-playing, group work, internships, work-study programs, and other forms of cooperation with the community and its resources.

Similar to their role in the existentialist classroom, students in a social reconstructionist class engage in many different activities to study the agreed-on topic, such as researching through the Internet, reading case histories, analyzing multiple aspects of the topic, formulating predictions, proposing and justifying workable revisions and solutions, and taking action to implement these solutions.

A good example of a social reconstructionist issue is a problem that captured the attention of a university class in 1999. Northwestern University journalism students teamed with the *Chicago Tribune* to investigate the trials and backgrounds of death row inmates in Illinois. Their work showed that some of the inmates were innocent; this uncovered serious flaws in the state's death penalty system and resulted in the release of several death row inmates. This series of investigations has prompted additional investigations, which, in turn, have freed numerous death row convicts, and has changed the way the United States thinks about capital punishment (American Civil Liberties Union, 2002; CBS News, 2002). In another example, social reconstructionists have fostered the development of nationwide literacy programs, especially for students in urban schools, "helping poor, urban students to become resilient, to change their communities, and thus improve their lives" (Reed & Davis, 1999, p. 293).

A social reconstructionist curriculum can help students become successful in school by encouraging them to develop a sense of self-worth (Reed & Davis, 1999). This can occur by engaging students in activities that instill purpose to their lives, providing them with a sense of accomplishment, and providing them with a support system. Among these activities are service learning and experiential learning activities that simultaneously foster students' academic achievement and respond to community needs. As you can infer, social reconstructionist principles are important in helping guide schools, teachers, and students toward a multicultural emphasis.

How are social reconstructionism, progressivism, and existentialism as educational philosophies similar? How are Freire's beliefs similar to the constructivist approach to education?

Social reconstructionism is a very influential and powerful philosophy, especially when its goals of social reform are combined with other philosophies such as progressivism and existentialism. Critics of social reconstructionism are concerned with its singularity of purpose (the formation of a utopian democratic world society) and the indoctrination of students into this purpose. However, the new world order of the 21st century may well need the type of impact that can be given by students whose education is provided in a social reconstructionist environment.

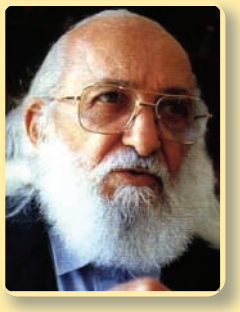
BUILDING BLOCK 2.7

Your Thoughts about Social Reconstructionism

- Review the statements in Building Block 2.1 associated with social reconstructionism (group V). How well do these statements describe the social reconstructionist philosophy of education?
- How did the inferences you made about social reconstructionism in Building Block 2.2 compare with the description of this educational philosophy?
- What do you think are the strengths of social reconstructionism as applied to education?
- What do you think are the weaknesses of social reconstructionism as applied to education?

A direct link to a summary of Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is available on the *Building Teachers* companion website.

BIOGRAPHY



Courtesy of the Paulo Freire Institute

Paulo Freire (1921–1997) was a Brazilian educator who, although educated in law, became interested in education after he had children. He worked in literacy campaigns with the poor in Brazil to help them overcome their sense of powerlessness and empower themselves. Because he challenged the ruling elite, he was exiled from Brazil during a military coup in 1964. He taught at Harvard University from 1969 until 1979, when he was able to return to Brazil. In 1988, he assumed the position of Minister of Education for the City of Sao Paulo, a large city that contains two-thirds of Brazil's schools.

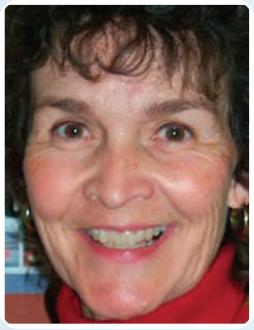
Freire is considered among the most influential educational thinkers in the late 20th century. He has been a major figure in progressive education, especially as it relates to empowering poor and oppressed adults. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* a significant and highly popular education book, he discussed his belief that education must involve dialogue and mutual understanding and must nurture respect between student and teacher, stressing that this was the key to the liberation of the oppressed. According to Freire, education is a two-way exchange of beliefs, thoughts, and ideas, unlike the traditional system of schooling, which he called a "banking approach" in which the teacher makes deposits of information into the students. He believed that true knowledge can result only from experiences in which students inquire into unknown phenomena and thereby establish their need for further knowledge. He believed that teachers must be sensitive to their students' viewpoints and lifestyles.

According to Freire, students must be viewed as being in charge of their own education and destinies. Once they arrive at this point, they can find their own ideas and then begin to reconstruct the society they knew on the basis of their new and validated conclusions.

Freire's contributions to education are firmly grounded in the progressivist approach and have helped expand progressivism to encompass the investigation and resolution of social problems and the subsequent reconstruction of a new and meaningful social order.

from the TEACHER

Kathy Heavers



Courtesy of Kathy Heavers

Come observe my classroom. Students have assigned seats. They receive a list of upcoming assignments once every 3 weeks. On the board are posted the assignments due the previous class meeting, the assignments due that day, and the assignments due during the next week. Papers to be handed back are in the center of each table, and materials we will be using during the class period are stacked neatly in a pile at the edge of the table. I determine the curriculum. The first 45 minutes are mine to present information, take questions, and facilitate teacher-directed activities; the last 45 minutes constitute student work time. Sounds pretty structured doesn't it? *Perennialism perhaps?*

Take a closer look. The students are seated at hexagonal tables scattered throughout the room, not desks in a straight row. If seats weren't assigned, students would sit at the same table, in the same chair, usually by a friend, all semester long. Instead, I change the seating arrangements every 4 weeks so that by the end of the semester, students will have sat at each table and with every person in the class. Most likely they will have met classmates they never knew before (and I still have control over seating arrangements if there are conflicts). *Is it looking more like progressivism?*

Students have a 3-week list of assignments so that they can see what is coming up, have time to think about their approach to the assignments, budget their time, and work ahead should they choose. If they were absent, the board reminds them of what was due the day they missed. Today's assignments tell everyone what will be covered that day, and the upcoming assignments allow them to work ahead should they finish the work due that day. Students budget their own time and have total control over what they accomplish. *Students have total control? Is this existentialism?*

As soon as the students are seated at their tables, they look through the corrected papers and take theirs, so corrected work is retrieved by each student before the tardy bell rings; no time is wasted distributing handouts to the class because they are already at the individual tables. Organization is modeled, and one by one, students begin to pick up on that mode of operation. *One by one? Progressivism or existentialism?*

Although I determine the curriculum, it is based on what postsecondary school admissions and scholarship committees require. Each student determines his or her approach to the assignments. I assign a personal essay for use with school or scholarship applications, but each student begins by listing his or her three most outstanding character traits. The student then asks two acquaintances to list what they consider to be his or her three most outstanding traits. Each student then chooses on which of the nine traits he or she will focus and how he or she will develop the essay. *Is this progressivism with an emphasis on the individual child and encouragement of self-expression, or is it existentialism where the truth is determined by the individual and the thoughts uniquely their own?*

Students finish their personal essay and go on to a goals essay, which can also be used with school and scholarship applications. After individual exploration and listening to essays developed by former students, each student outlines his or her career goal, education goal (2-year, 4-year, vocational, technical, military, or apprenticeship), major, and choice of school(s), as *no single set of curricular outcomes is appropriate for all students.* Carefully the student crafts his or her goals essay. Teacher and peer evaluations result in several drafts before the final copy is submitted. Acceptance to a postsecondary school and funding are the desired outcomes. *Individual students, individual traits, individual goals. Teacher facilitates investigation, working with each student to probe for understanding and determine approach. Existentialism?*

So what philosophy most closely approximates not only my beliefs about education but my practices as well? At the beginning of my career, as a traditional English teacher, it was *perennialism.* I addressed the rigorous curriculum determined by others and imparted the knowledge, dealing mostly with the classics. We covered the material primarily through lecture and direct questioning, with some self-expression periodically as a motivator.

I moved on to *essentialism* in a class called Skills Lab. Students worked to improve reading, listening, study, and critical thinking skills, all essential for success, not only in school but in the real world as well. My approach was one of *progressivism.* I prepared students to be lifelong learners. I pretested each student to determine ability level and then engaged that student in hands-on activities on that level. Although the class began with teacher-directed activities, these were followed by individual students working their way through "stations" focusing on the goals of the class. There were 24 students, each working on his or her own ability level at his or her own station improving personal skills in that area. *Individuality . . . informality of classroom procedure . . . meaningful . . . student-focused . . . teacher as facilitator . . . progressivism.*

And now, although there are aspects of progressivism in my Senior Seminar class, I have moved on again, to *existentialism.* Why all this movement over the years? The subject matter demanded it. The needs of the students determined it. And my change in philosophy influenced it. Education is not a static field; my years of experience have prompted me to grow and change . . . shift and adjust . . . to the benefit of the students and to the renewed interest of the teacher.

2005 Colorado Teacher of the Year
Montrose High School
Montrose County School District
Montrose, Colorado

With what parts of the philosophies you have investigated do you agree? With what parts do you disagree?

The Eclectic Approach

Many people find they agree with some of the statements and premises of several of the philosophies but disagree with other parts.

If you embrace some of the tenets of two or more philosophies, you are said to be **eclectic** in your philosophical thoughts about education. Eclecticism is an approach in which you select and use what you consider to be the most appropriate portions of several different philosophies. For example, you may believe students should learn classic and other timeless concepts (perennialism) as well as the basics (essentialism) but that students should accomplish their studies through investigating, inquiring, and discovering on their own (progressivism). Or, you may believe in using group work to help students increase their academic knowledge (progressivism) and in encouraging students to make responsible choices about what to study (existentialism) but insist that their choices include topics that have an impact on society and social issues (social reconstructionism).

BUILDING BLOCK 2.8

Reexamining Your Philosophical Beliefs about Education

Take a few minutes to reexamine your philosophical tenets in education as revealed by your initial thoughts in Building Blocks 2.1 and 2.2 and refined by your studies in this chapter. Then, write your answers to the following questions.

1. What do you believe should be taught? To which of the philosophies is this the closest?
2. Who do you believe should decide what should be taught? To which of the philosophies is this the closest?
3. Why do you believe this material should be taught? To which of the philosophies is this the closest?
4. How do you believe this material should be taught? To which of the philosophies is this the closest?
5. What do you think the teacher's role should be? To which of the philosophies is this the closest?
6. What do you think the student's role should be? To which of the philosophies is this the closest?

A Continuum of Schools of Philosophic Thought

The five major philosophies of education you have explored can be placed on a continuum, with the highest amount of curriculum direction provided by teachers, educators, and society on the left and the highest amount of curriculum direction provided by students on the right (see Figure 2.3).

On the left (no political analogy implied) of Figure 2.3 is the perennialist philosophy in which society at large, through numerous citizen and political task forces, has estab-

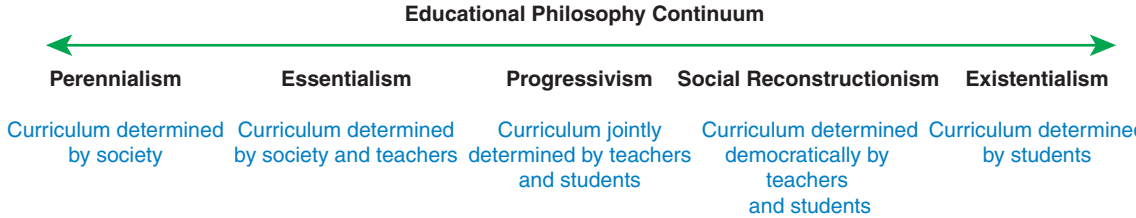


Figure 2.3
Educational Philosophy Continuum.

lished certain basic classics and truths that should be transmitted to students; this curriculum preserves the liberal arts tradition. Then comes essentialism, in which the educators have determined the basic subjects and skills all students must know and be able to do based on society's determination of basic subjects and skills.

Next is progressivism, in which the teacher and the students jointly decide what is important to learn—basic classics and truths, basic skills, and current and changing topics. This is followed by social reconstructionism, in which classes of students decide what to learn based on a democratic decision of which of the many ills in society should receive their attention. On the right is existentialism, in which the student decides what to learn based primarily on his or her perceived needs and interests.

Other philosophies, such as idealism, realism, experimentalism, and critical theory, have an impact on education, but we have focused in this chapter on the philosophies we believe are basic to education.

School Philosophy and Mission Statements

Most schools formalize their educational philosophies in written mission statements. A mission statement gives the school's basic purpose and goals and often provides insight into its prevailing educational philosophy.

Portions of actual mission statements of a few schools are given here. As you read them, try to identify their primary educational philosophies. What aspects of the mission statement lead you to that specific philosophy?

Mission Statement of a Public Elementary School
The mission of our school is to offer all students an opportunity to achieve their greatest potential by providing the highest quality of learning. We believe that with the guidance of our staff, the involvement of parents, and the encouragement of the community, all students can learn and master basic academic skills. Our mission is to provide each child with a superior education and necessary skills to lead them in becoming self-sufficient, productive citizens in our ever-changing world.

Mission Statement of a Public Middle School
Our mission is to provide a unique learning experience for all students which will be academically challenging, interdisciplinary in nature, and which will reflect the values of the local community and of society as a whole. Students will be enabled to develop individually while being given the means to recognize their own self-worth, and to achieve their role as knowledgeable and responsible members of the society of the future.

Mission Statement of a Public High School
The mission of our school is to provide each student with a safe learning environment and an equitable opportunity to develop competencies necessary to become a productive member of society.

Mission Statement of a Private School
We believe that a child learns best within an environment which supports each individual's unique process of development. We emphasize cognitive and physical development along with global awareness and peaceful conflict resolution. The teacher functions as a "guide" to help students carry out many different kinds of research following their interests, and develop their curiosity and a love of learning. Our priorities are for students to make intelligent choices, focus and concentrate, and engage in caring and purposeful interaction with the environment and with others.

BUILDING BLOCK 2.9

Use the Internet to find mission statements of schools in your area.

- Are they consistent with what you think about education?
- Would you want to teach at these schools? Why or why not?
- How important do you believe it is that your personal philosophy of education be congruent with the written philosophy of the school at which you teach?

Philosophic Perspectives of Non-Eurocentric Cultures

The educational philosophies we have discussed so far are American in nature and are steeped in European philosophical traditions. These philosophies are the driving force behind American education. Using this Eurocentric view, you have examined what you think is important in education and how those thoughts inform the beginnings of your philosophy of education.

As you have seen, our philosophy of education is strongly influenced by who we are and what our beliefs are. Tradition and culture are very important factors in the formation of our beliefs. Many teachers grew up in non-Eurocentric cultures, and many received their education in countries other than the United States. Cultural diversity among students is the norm in the classroom, and groups that used to be considered the minority are rapidly becoming the majority in many school districts. Thus, as a teacher, your cultural heritage is very likely to be different from those of some of the students in your classes. This means your philosophy of education could be in conflict with the philosophical beliefs of some students and their families. As a teacher, you must be aware and respectful of the values of your students, their families, and the community, even if these values differ from your own convictions. Activities and teaching methodologies that are inconsistent with the value structures of any particular culture represented in your classroom may limit motivation and may precipitate conflict between what the student experiences at school and at home. You must recognize and deal with these differences to avoid misunderstandings that can interfere with your effectiveness as a teacher. In Chapter 4, you will explore in more detail cultural diversity and how it affects teaching.

An important aspect of every effective teacher's philosophy of education is an awareness of their students' diversity.

Theories of Educational Psychology

This investigation into educational thought would not be complete without a look at the basic and pervasive psychologies of education. Whereas one's educational philosophy focuses on the now-familiar questions of what should be taught, how it should be taught, and what teachers and the students should do in the teaching/learning process, educational psychologies deal with ways in which the mind actually behaves while it is learning—that is, how learning occurs. As you will see, educational psychologies exert strong influences on teaching and philosophical practices, and teaching and philosophical practices exert strong influences on educational psychologies. They help provide structures for teaching methodologies, curriculum selection, and assessment procedures. You will examine educational psychologies in detail as you progress through your teacher preparation program.

As with philosophies, there are no right or wrong psychologies. During this discussion, you will examine your *own* thoughts and form your *own* conclusions. In so doing, you are forming the platform on which you will construct your personal conceptualization of excellence in teaching. And, as you have seen, excellent teachers have many different qualities.

There are many psychologies—many ways of explaining how people learn and what motivates them to behave the way they do. In this section, we focus on four psychologies that have different understandings of the human mind and therefore different applications in school. *Humanism* focuses on the need for personalization to achieve meaningful learning. *Behaviorism* explains learning in terms of external factors and stimulation. *Information processing* explains learning through analysis of how the brain processes new and stored information. *Constructivism* holds that learning occurs by attaching new experiences to existing knowledge in meaningful ways.

BUILDING BLOCK 2.10

Educational Psychologies

Write down a few situations in which:

1. The teacher tried to see things your way. What educational psychology does this seem to represent?
2. The teacher encouraged you to come up with your own ideas. What learning theory does this seem to represent?
3. The teacher tried to encourage you to learn by promising you rewards. What psychological theory does this seem to represent?
4. The teacher taught you how to memorize long lists of information. What learning theory does this seem to represent?

Let us examine these four theoretical approaches to learning.

Humanism

The psychology of **humanism** emphasizes people's intrinsic capacities for personal growth and their abilities and desires to control their own destinies. Humanists believe people are capable of learning through their own efforts. You became somewhat familiar with humanist principles in Chapter 1, when you looked at the work of William Glasser and Arthur Combs.

Humanism was formalized as a psychology in the 1960s. The humanist believes it is necessary for teachers to understand the perceptions of individual students—to find how things seem from the student's point of view. Humanists see two basic components of learning: (1) the acquisition of information and (2) the individual's personalization and internalization of that information. According to the humanist, teachers not only must

know their subjects and see that the material is properly organized and presented but also must help students make personal meaning out of the material.

With which of the major philosophies of education do you suppose the humanist psychology is most compatible? With which do you suppose it is least compatible?

Humanism is well represented by the work of Glasser and Combs and also by the work of Maslow and Rogers. Abraham Maslow developed a hierarchical theory of human motivation that asserts that people become self-actualized to accomplish higher motives after they have fulfilled certain basic needs. (You will investigate Maslow's hierarchy in Chapter 3.) Carl Rogers developed the "Person-Centered" approach to psychology that says if we approach a person with empathy, genuineness, and nonpossessive warmth, we can enable that person to grow and develop maximally (Rowan, 2001). Rogers believed that people have a natural desire to learn and that learning must be meaningful, self-initiated, and free from threat. To Rogers, the teacher is a facilitator of learning, acting as a guide and providing students with the needed resources.

Have you ever had a teacher who was so wrapped up in the subject material that he or she seemed to be unaware that students were in the class? How did this make you feel?

Rather than focusing exclusively on the material to be taught, humanist educators also focus on the people who are doing the learning. They focus on people's feelings, interests, likes, dislikes, abilities, and other personal qualities. The humanist educator believes learning is an "inside job"—that people learn through their own intrinsic efforts. This contrasts with other approaches that focus on pouring the information into the student without particular regard for the individual. Humanist educators believe teachers are not essential as a condition for learning; students can learn through their own internal efforts. They believe teachers cannot "teach" something to an entire class of students and expect every student will learn it. Humanist teachers adopt a position of "facilitator" to help students find and implement their most effective ways of learning.

A direct link to the Association for Humanistic Psychology website is available on the *Building Teachers* companion website.

Behaviorism

Behaviorism is a psychology that contends that learning as exhibited by one's behavior is shaped by the environment. According to behaviorists, the behavior of an individual is formed more by the actions and reactions of other people than by the individual's own free will. The psychology of behaviorism arose in the late 1940s and was based on the work of the Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov, who developed the concept of **classical conditioning** through his research with dogs. In Pavlov's scheme, dogs can be conditioned to salivate in response to the ringing of bells as well as the presence of food, even though bell ringing has nothing to do with actually receiving food.

B. F. Skinner (1904–1990) extended the work of Pavlov to develop his **operant conditioning** theory. According to Skinner, a person's behavior is a function of its consequences; that is, it is what happens *afterward,* not before, that influences behavior. This has come to be known as **behaviorism.** To visualize this theory, imagine a student who takes an algebra test. The teacher announces that a candy bar will be given to every student who earns a perfect score. Our student gets a perfect score on the first test, gets the candy bar, and, according to behavioral theory, studies hard for the next test because of the expected reward. As another example, suppose you begin a conversation with your neighbor during class. The instructor stops the class and reprimands you. According to behavioral theory, you will not talk with your neighbor again because you want to avoid similar consequences in the future. It is the reprimand that has shaped your future behavior. It is what happened afterward that influences your future behavior. The basic principle is that the consequences of any behavior will cause an increase, decrease, or no change in the likelihood of that behavior occurring again.

The psychology of behaviorism has wide use in the classroom. As you can imagine, numerous classroom and behavior management strategies, such as the rules-rewards-punishment approach, are grounded in behaviorism. (You will investigate methods of classroom management in Chapter 8.) Many instructional strategies are behaviorist in nature. Programmed instruction was one of the earliest educational applications of behaviorism; this has given way to computer programs, interactive CD-ROMs, computer-based tutorial programs, and other computer-assisted instruction applications. Behaviorist teachers tend to favor drill, repetition, and reward-based teaching methodologies.

Technology & Education

A good example of the influence of behaviorism in the classroom is **programmed instruction,** a method of teaching attributed to B. F. Skinner because of his concern about the difficulty in providing suitable academic reinforcements to each student in a class. In programmed instruction, the unit or lesson is broken into a series of very small steps that are presented in sequence. Each step requires a response from the student. If the student is correct, the teacher provides some form of reinforcement, such as "Good for you!" "Yes!!!" "Great job!" and the like, and the student is permitted to move to the next step. If the student is incorrect, he is referred to material designed to teach the concept.

In the 1950s and 1960s, programmed instruction was presented in text form. When computers became available, the system was computerized. Typically, in electronic programmed instruction, a piece of information is presented on the screen and the student is asked to key a response to a question about this information. The computer gives a "Yes" or a "No" response. If the response is "Yes," the computer provides reinforcement. If the response is "No," the computer refers the student to additional screens that "teach" the information; after reviewing this additional material, the student tries a similar question.

Current applications often bypass the reinforcing and recycling features but retain the system of presenting the information in small incremental steps. Because students can work their way through the program without teacher assistance, such programs often are called **tutorial programs.** You may have used a tutorial program in school, or you may have used one to learn a new computer program.

Links to several web-based programmed instruction lessons and tutorials can be found on the *Building Teachers* companion website. Computerized tutorials are also available on CD-ROMs. Try one for yourself.

Much debate surrounds the efficacy of using a behavioral approach in motivation. Certainly there are times when rewards and punishments foster students' attainment of desired goals. We all are behaviorists to some extent. Who, for example, has not wondered how much credit would be given for certain tasks accompanying their college courses? Indeed, report cards themselves can be considered behaviorist in nature.

There is ongoing debate between those who believe humanism is the best approach to education and those who believe behaviorism is the best approach. Humanists subscribe to the idea that the most meaningful motivations are related to the internal satisfactions that come from doing well and that students learn to work for their own intrinsic feelings of accomplishment. For example, the inward uplifting feeling you get from presenting a well-prepared report is far more motivating and satisfying than receiving an external reward from the professor (although that is comforting as well). In the behaviorist classroom, students learn to work for rewards given by the teacher.

We take no sides on the humanism versus behaviorism issue. Both have strengths, and both have limitations. You will study these theories in detail in later courses, after which you can make up your own minds.

With which of the major philosophies of education do you suppose the behaviorist psychology is most compatible? With which do you suppose it is least compatible?

Information Processing

Information processing theory focuses on how the brain processes information by attending to stimuli, receiving information, processing information, storing information in long-term and short-term memory, and retrieving information. According to the information processing approach (often called **cognitive psychology**), people have the ability to manipulate information in thinking, problem solving, and other intellectual operations by using three basic mental processes: attending to sensory input in the sensory register, encoding the attended information in the short-term memory, and retrieving information from the long-term memory.

Information processing psychology was developed in the late 1950s, when computer technology was being developed. It was formed partly as a reaction to limitations seen in the behaviorist approach to education and partly to use the computer as a model for the way people think.

According to the information processing theory, people first take information into their brains by paying attention (attending) to information coming their way. The information enters the cognitive processing system through the senses and is taken into the sensory register. If the individual does nothing with the information in the sensory register, it is lost. This occurs, for example, when the teacher is lecturing and the student is daydreaming; the teacher's words reach the student's ears and stimulate the hearing receptors, but nothing happens to them in the sensory register. On the other hand, if the person pays attention to the information, it is transferred to the short-term memory, where it can be held, processed, and transferred to the long-term memory, or, if nothing is done to process the information, it is lost. Once in long-term memory, the information is never lost (although it may be difficult to retrieve) (see Figure 2.4).

According to the information processing theory, learning takes place in the short-term memory, where new information and information retrieved from long-term memory interact with each other. The result is a change in memory. It is the teacher's responsibility to help students develop processes that support the needed changes in memory. This is carried out by employing strategies such as the following:

With which of the major philosophies of education do you suppose the information processing theory is most compatible? With which do you suppose it is least compatible?

- Organizing information carefully
- Linking new information to existing knowledge
- Recognizing the limits of attention
- Recognizing the limits of short-term memory
- Providing encoding strategies to ensure that new information is meaningful

It is important to note that the terms *sensory register, short-term memory,* and *long-term memory* refer to processes rather than actual structures. Medical and psychological research currently is taking place to ascertain the actual physiological workings of the brain; some day we may have information processing models that show how the brain cells themselves work in attending, perceiving, storing, retrieving, and manipulating information.

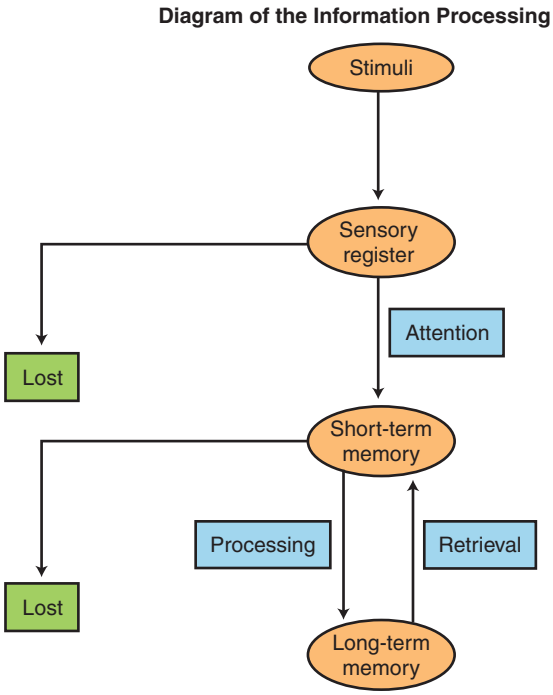


Figure 2.4
Information Processing Model.

Constructivism

Constructivism is an approach to teaching and learning that asserts that people actively construct their own understandings of information—that learners combine existing information with new information such that the new knowledge provides personal meaning. In the constructivist viewpoint, people build their own knowledge and their own representations of knowledge from their own experience. Learning does not occur by transmitting information from the teacher or the textbook to the student's brain; instead, each student constructs his or her own personal and valid understanding of this information.

Jean Piaget (1896–1980), a Swiss child psychologist, gave structure to the idea of constructivism. Piaget viewed the acquisition of knowledge as a continually developing process rather than as an end state. He viewed the mind as an aggregation of cognitive structures he called **schemata** (singular: **schema**). According to the constructivist view, schemata are opened, enlarged, divided, and connected to one another in response to the influx of information into a person's mind. Because no two people experience the same information in the same way, the schemata possessed by each individual are unique to that individual and are linked to one another in ways that represent the unique experiences the individual has had and the unique connections the individual has made between and among those experiences. In a sense, schema theory is like a set of computer files; each computer user labels files in his or her own way and groups them in folders unique to that person.

Independently, in the 1920s and 1930s, Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), a Russian psychologist, also developed basic constructs of constructivism, but his work was not known to the Western world until much later. Whereas Piaget focused on the individual nature of constructing knowledge, Vygotsky emphasized the role other people have in an individual's construction of knowledge. In our computer analogy, Vygotsky would say that a person set up files in a unique way but used the input of other people to get started, resulting in some similarities between this person's filing system and that of others.

The constructivist teacher helps students make sense by helping each person attach the new information to information he already possesses. This process is often called constructing information, hence the term *constructivism*. The role of the constructivist teacher is to facilitate learning—to provide a variety of learning experiences that will enable each student to learn in his or her own unique way and construct the information such that it makes sense to that individual. The constructivist teacher asks students for their conclusions and their explanations rather than repetitions of what the teacher presented. To the constructivist teacher, it is far more important to listen than to tell.

As you know, this entire text is constructivist in nature. We have described the ways it is designed to engage students in Chapter 0, and you will revisit this concept periodically throughout the text.

With which of the major philosophies of education do you suppose constructivism is most compatible? With which do you suppose it is least compatible?

BUILDING BLOCK 2.11

Educational Psychologies in the Classroom

Review your responses to the questions in Building Block 2.10. Do you feel the same way? Are there any changes?

List two or three situations in which your learning was facilitated using each of the following approaches to education:

- Humanism
- Behaviorism
- Information processing
- Constructivism

Your Philosophy of Education

You have examined several basic philosophies and psychologies of education and have looked at your own thoughts. Now, you are ready to develop your own tentative philosophy of education—one that is personal to you.

BUILDING BLOCK 2.12

My Philosophy of Education

Write a short preliminary philosophy of education. Consider these kinds of questions:

- What is the purpose of education? (What goals do you want your students to achieve?)
- What content should be taught? Why?
- How will you teach? Why?
- What are the teacher's roles and responsibilities?
- What are the students' roles and responsibilities?

Your philosophy should be a well-thought-out synthesis of your own thinking about your own teaching, *not* merely a compilation of answers to these questions. The questions are offered only to stimulate your thinking.

Compare your philosophy of education with the primary philosophies and psychologies you explored in this chapter. With which one or ones does your philosophy most favorably compare? Briefly explain why.

This activity is deliberately given at the beginning of the course to give you a chance to reflect on your own thinking and to review your thoughts as you move along. As such, your statement will not be an all-inclusive opus, nor will it be definitively refined. Rather, it will be an expression of your ideas about the teaching/learning experience as you see it now. You will use this statement to guide you in your construction and reconstruction of your thinking about quality education as you progress through the course.

Save this philosophy statement; you will use it again later.

Metaphors

One last comment dealing with your beliefs about education involves the use of **metaphors.** Researchers have looked at metaphors and teachers' latent beliefs about teaching as indicated by the metaphors they choose to characterize their role as a teacher (Bou Jaoudi, 2000; Munby, 1986; Pajares, 1992; Pittman & O'Neill, 2001; Tobin, 1990). For example, teachers characterizing themselves as "captains of their ships" may be very strong leaders, reluctant to transfer responsibility for learning to children.

BUILDING BLOCK 2.13

Metaphors

Take a minute or two and think about a metaphor you would use to characterize your role as a teacher. Do you consider yourself the captain of your ship? A bus driver? An explorer? A scout leader? A parent?

Think about the metaphors that could be used to describe what a teacher does, and select one you believe most closely represents your current thinking about what a teacher's role is. Write it down and explain what it means.

Refer to the metaphor you choose frequently during this course; consider whether you want to change it. This may be one of the better indicators of how you are constructing the content of the course.

Conclusion

In this chapter, you have examined your current beliefs about education and have compared these beliefs with the characteristics of several different philosophies. We have suggested that educational philosophies try to answer several basic questions: what should be taught, who should decide what should be taught, why this material should be taught, how this material should be taught, and what the roles of the teacher and the student should be.

Perennialists believe schools should transmit the accumulated wisdom of past generations to today's students in a disciplined environment. Essentialists believe students should learn basic material such as the "3 Rs"; the teacher is the authority, and the students' job is to learn the material. Progressivists believe schools should develop thinking and problem-solving skills in students and should help students learn how to keep up with change; students and teachers are co-inquirers into areas of study determined by the school system and the teacher. Existentialists believe schools should teach students to make responsible choices as free individuals and should encourage them to study what is of interest to them through individual discovery and inquiry; the teacher functions primarily as a facilitator. Social reconstructionists believe it is the duty of schools to educate students to influence the reconstruction of society.

You saw that American education is driven by these Eurocentric philosophies. However, many students and teachers subscribe to non-Eurocentric perspectives, and their beliefs and expectations may differ from those governing mainstream American education.

You found there are several psychologies that describe beliefs about the way people learn. Humanists believe people are intrinsically capable and desirous of growing and learning. Behaviorists believe people's behavior is shaped by their environment and its extrinsic forces. Information processing theorists believe people learn through proper manipulation of the sensory register and short- and long-term memory functions. Constructivists believe people actively construct their own understandings by combining new information with prior experiences.

In this chapter, you saw that you already have beliefs and ideas about education, some of which are quite strong. From these prior conceptualizations and subsequent expansion and refinement, you constructed your own individual philosophy of education, which, in all probability, revealed an eclectic approach that embodies fundamental principles and concepts from several philosophies.

Trying to categorize your beliefs into a single philosophy is difficult. Do not be concerned if you were unable to put a clear-cut label on your philosophy of education. Remember that most contemporary philosophies are eclectic in nature and that you are building a philosophical foundation. You will have many experiences and will study much new information as you progress through this course and your teacher preparation program, and, indeed, throughout your professional career. Your foundation may be reinforced, or it may undergo continual revision and refinement as a result of experiences. The bricks you have laid in the foundation in this chapter are not set in cement. Keep your mind open and be willing to explore all the factors that you will experience.

The next chapter begins Part 2 of this text. In it, you will explore the source of perhaps the biggest impact on your educational philosophy—your students.

Key Terms and Concepts

Axiology, 40
Behaviorism, 60
Classical conditioning, 60
Cognitive psychology, 61
Constructivism, 63
Cosmology, 40
Deductive reasoning, 42
Epistemology, 40
Humanism, 59
Inductive reasoning, 42
Information processing theory, 61
Logic, 40
Metaphor, 64
Metaphysics, 40
Ontology, 40
Operant conditioning, 60
Pedagogy, 42
Programmed instruction, 61
Schemata (singular: schema), 63
Theology, 40
Tutorial program, 61

Construct and Apply

1. Suppose you are a sixth grade teacher and you have to teach all the subjects. How would you set up your classroom if you were a
   a. Perennialist?
   b. Essentialist?
   c. Progressivist?
2. A high school English teacher has decided to teach a 4-week unit on American poetry.
   a. Describe how this teacher would teach this material if she subscribed to the essentialist philosophy of education.
   b. Describe how this teacher would teach this material if she subscribed to the progressivist philosophy of education.
3. Fill in the columns below with the major concepts pertaining to each educational philosophy discussed in this chapter. Then, fill in the last column to represent your own philosophical thoughts.

	Perennialism	Essentialism	Progressivism	Existentialism	Social Reconstructionism	Yours
What should be taught?						
Why should it be taught?						
How should it be taught?						
What should the teacher's role be?						
What should the student's role be?						

4. Suppose you were teaching a class of fourth graders. List several things you might do in your classroom that reflect each of the following approaches to teaching and learning:
   a. Humanism
   b. Behaviorism
   c. Information processing
   d. Constructivism

Deconstructing the Standards

INTASC Principle #2 says:

> The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.

INTASC Principle #3 says:

> The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

For each of these two principles, write your responses to the following:

- What part(s) of this principle does this chapter address?
- How does this chapter address this principle?
- How will the concepts in this chapter help you apply this principle as a teacher?

Field Experience

- What are the governing educational philosophies of your cooperating teacher and the school to which you are assigned for your field experience?
- What are some of the ways in which your cooperating teacher approaches children of diverse cultures?
- What does your cooperating teacher in your field experience school do that shows the use of humanistic methods? What does your cooperating teacher do that shows the use of behaviorist methods?

Your Portfolio

In this chapter, you have considered many factors dealing with several philosophies and psychologies of education. Select two or three pieces of evidence that show your mastery of this topic and put them in your portfolio. This evidence could include your statement of your educational philosophy and other work done in class, work done out of class, or field experiences where you have had the opportunity to demonstrate your philosophy by implementing some aspect of classroom activity based on your philosophy.

Technology Resources

Check out the *Building Teachers* companion website—http://www.education.wadsworth.com/martinloomis1—for more information about philosophies and psychologies of education, including links to the following resources:

- Complete texts of *A Nation at Risk* and *The No Child Left Behind Act Executive Summary,* as well as a link to the Core Knowledge Foundation established by E. D. Hirsch, Jr.
- "Who Owns the Zebra?" deductive logic puzzle
- A summary of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
- American Association for Humanistic Psychology
- Biographies of prominent philosophers: Mortimer Adler, Robert Hutchins, William Chandler Bagley, A.S. Neill, and George Counts

See video footage of effective teachers in action on the *Building Teachers* CD-ROM that accompanies your textbook.

Also link to InfoTrac College Edition through the *Building Teachers* companion website. Use InfoTrac College Edition to search for articles to enhance your study.