

chapter

# 4

## *Philosophical Foundations of U.S. Education*



*I try to provide opportunities for my students to be active agents in change, which affirms who they are and what they consider important. I also collaborate with students' families, the community, and other social justice educators. Such teaching can shape, transform, and influence individuals whose everyday decisions, in turn, have an impact on the rest of society.*

Kimberly Min, third-grade teacher. Quoted in *Teaching to Change the World*, 2007, p. 491.



## CLASSROOM CASE

### *The Realities of Teaching*

**THE CHALLENGE:** Articulating your educational philosophy and deciding what knowledge is of greatest worth.

Mrs. Pushkov, your mentor teacher, teaches social studies in the classroom next to yours. She takes what she calls a "critical, social justice" approach to teaching—that is, she wants her students to question the status quo. She wants them to learn the important role they can play in improving the world.

To raise her students' level of awareness, Mrs. Pushkov has them think about how race, socioeconomic status, and gender are reflected in political events and human rights violations around the world. Prior to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, for example, she spent several class sessions explaining to students how Chinese policies in Tibet had led to recent demonstrations in support of Tibet around the world.

Her students often participate in small-group projects, simulations, role-plays, and classroom debates on societal issues. And from time to time, Mrs. Pushkov organizes her students to take action to address local social problems. Last week, as part of a unit on the homeless in the city, her students spent the weekend helping at a neighborhood soup kitchen.

Some of Mrs. Pushkov's fellow teachers are skeptical about her methods. They believe her teaching is "too political" and that she does her students a disservice by making them believe that they can change the world. These teachers also point out that parents want their children to learn the traditional basics rather than learn how to become social activists.

Today, you have just joined Mrs. Pushkov and two other teachers in the teachers' lunchroom. They are discussing strategies for teaching writing. "My kids really got involved in the unit on the homeless," Mrs. Pushkov says. "Now they're working hard to express in writing what they experienced last week at the soup kitchen. They believe they have something to say. Two of my kids even plan to send their papers to the editorial page of the newspaper."

"What do students *really* learn from assignments like that?" asks the teacher seated across the table from Mrs. Pushkov. "I don't think our kids need to be firing off letters to the editor, getting involved in all of these causes. We should just teach them how to write—period. Then if they want to focus on eliminating poverty, crime, or whatever, that should be their decision."

The teacher then looks at you and asks, "What do you think?"

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Why is philosophy important to teachers?
2. What is the nature of philosophy?
3. What determines your educational philosophy?
4. What are the branches of philosophy?
5. What are five modern philosophical orientations to teaching?
6. What psychological orientations have influenced teaching philosophies?
7. How can you develop your educational philosophy?

**A**s the classroom case for this chapter suggests, teachers can have conflicting views regarding how to answer vital questions about their work. What should the purpose(s) of education be? What knowledge is of most worth? What values should teachers encourage their students to develop? How should learning be evaluated? As difficult as these questions might be, teachers must answer them. To answer these and similar questions, teachers use philosophy.



## WHY IS PHILOSOPHY IMPORTANT TO TEACHERS?

Today's schools reflect the philosophical foundations and the aspirations and values brought to this country by its founders and generations of settlers. Understanding the philosophical ideas that have shaped education in the United States is an important part of your education as a professional. This understanding will enable you "to think clearly about what [you] are doing, and to see what [you] are doing in the larger context of individual and social development" (Ozmon & Craver, 2007).

Still, you may wonder, what is the value of knowing about the philosophy of education? Will that knowledge help you become a better teacher? An understanding of the philosophy of education will enhance your professionalism in three important ways. First, knowledge of philosophy of education will help you understand the complex political forces that influence schools. When people act politically to influence schools, their actions reflect their educational philosophies. Second, knowledge of how philosophy has influenced our schools will help you evaluate more effectively current proposals for change. You will be in a better position to evaluate changes if you understand how schools have developed and how current proposals might relate to previous change efforts. Last, awareness of how philosophy has influenced teaching is a hallmark of professionalism in education.

In addition, philosophy can reveal principles that may be used as a guide for professional action. Some teachers disagree and think that philosophical reflections have nothing to contribute to the actual act of teaching (this stance, of course, is itself a philosophy of education). However, as the great educational philosopher John Dewey (1916, p. 383) put it, to be concerned with education is to be concerned with philosophy: "If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men, philosophy may even be defined as *the general theory of education*."

Philosophy is also important to schools. Most schools have a statement of philosophy that serves to focus the efforts of teachers, administrators, students, and parents in a desired direction. A school's philosophy is actually a public statement of school values, a description of the educational goals it seeks to attain. So important is a school's philosophy that school accrediting agencies evaluate schools partially on the basis of whether they achieve the goals set forth in their statements of philosophy.



## WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY?

**Philosophy** is concerned with identifying the basic truths about being, knowledge, and conduct. While the religions of the world arrive at these truths based on supernatural revelations, philosophers use their reasoning powers to search for answers to the fundamental questions of life. Philosophers use a careful, step-by-step, question-and-answer technique to extend their understanding of the world. Through very exacting use of language and techniques of linguistic and conceptual analysis, philosophers attempt to describe the world in which we live.

The word *philosophy* may be literally translated from the original Greek as "love of wisdom." In particular, a philosophy is a set of ideas formulated to comprehend the world. Among the world's great philosophers have been Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Saint Thomas Aquinas, René Descartes, John Locke, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, John Dewey, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Mortimer Adler. They devoted their lives to pondering the significant questions of life: What is truth? What is reality? What life is worth living?



## WHAT DETERMINES YOUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY?

In simplest terms, your **educational philosophy** consists of what you believe about education—the set of principles that guides your professional action.

Every teacher, whether he or she recognizes it, has a philosophy of education—a set of beliefs about how human beings learn and grow and what one should learn in order to live the good life. Professional teachers recognize that teaching, because it is concerned with *what ought to be*, is basically a philosophical enterprise.

Your behavior as a teacher is strongly connected to your beliefs about teaching and learning, students, knowledge, and what is worth knowing (see Figure 4.1). Regardless of where you stand in regard to these dimensions of teaching, you should be aware of the need to reflect continually on *what* you do believe and *why* you believe it. For example, if your teacher education program is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (approximately half of the programs in the nation are), you will be required to learn about educational philosophy in light of the following NCATE standard: "[Teacher candidates] understand and are able to apply knowledge related to the . . . philosophical foundations of education. (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002, p. 196)

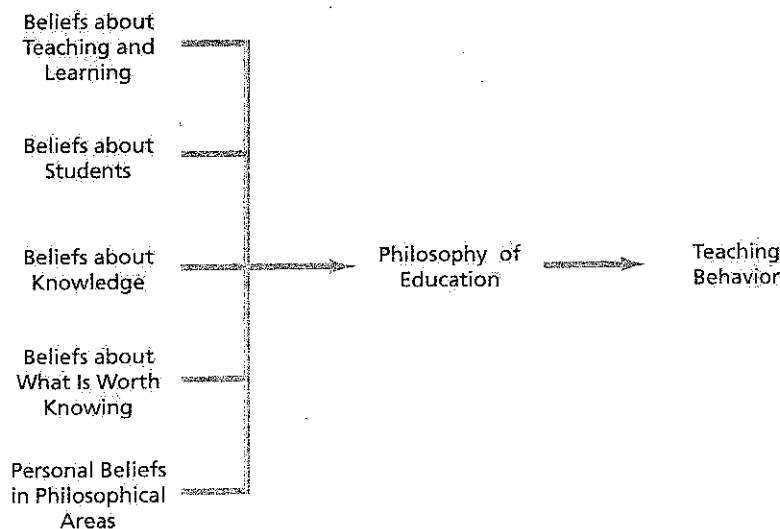


FIGURE 4.1 Educational beliefs and teaching behavior

## *Beliefs About Teaching and Learning*

One of the most important components of your educational philosophy is your belief about teaching and learning. In other words, what will be your primary role as a teacher? Will it be to transmit knowledge to students and then to guide their practice as they develop skills in using that knowledge? Or will it be to develop self-directed learners by building on students' interests, prior experiences, and current understandings? The first view emphasizes *transmission* of knowledge to students, while the second view emphasizes students' *construction* of knowledge. (In Chapter 10, you will learn more about how to develop teaching strategies based on a constructivist view of teaching and learning.)

The transmission view emphasizes changes in students' behavior. Learning involves making associations between various stimuli and responses. In other words, learning results from forces that are *external* to the individual. The constructivist view, on the other hand, emphasizes the individual student's experiences and cognitions. Learning occurs when personal experiences lead to changes in thoughts or actions. That is, learning is largely the result of *internal* forces within the individual. To assess your current beliefs about teaching and learning, complete the activity presented in Figure 4.2.

## *Beliefs About Students*

Your beliefs about students will have a great influence on how you teach. Every teacher formulates an image in his or her mind about what students are like—their dispositions, skills, motivation levels, and expectations. What you believe students are like is based on your unique life experiences, particularly your observations of young people and your knowledge of human growth and development.

Negative views of students may promote teacher-student relationships based on fear and coercion rather than on trust and helpfulness. Extremely positive views may risk not providing students with sufficient structure and direction and not communicating sufficiently high expectations. In the final analysis, the truly professional teacher—the one who has a carefully thought-out educational philosophy—recognizes that, although children differ in their predispositions to learn and grow, they all *can* learn. In regard to beliefs about students, it is important that teachers convey positive attitudes toward their students and a belief that they *can* learn.

## *Beliefs About Knowledge*

How teachers view knowledge is directly related to how they go about teaching. If teachers view knowledge as the sum total of small bits of subject matter or discrete facts, students will most likely spend a great deal of time learning that information in a straightforward, rote manner. Recall your own school days; perhaps you had to memorize the capitals of the fifty states, definitions for the eight parts of speech, the periodic table in chemistry, and so on.

Other teachers view knowledge more conceptually, that is, as consisting of the big ideas that enable us to understand and influence our environment. Such a teacher would want students to be able to explain how legislative decisions are made in the state capital, how an understanding of the eight parts of speech can empower the writer and enliven one's writing, and how chemical elements are grouped according to their atomic numbers.

Finally, teachers differ in their beliefs about whether students' increased understanding of their own experiences is a legitimate form of knowledge. Knowledge of self and one's experiences in the world is not the same as knowledge about a particular subject, yet personal knowledge is essential for a full, satisfying life. The Technology in Action feature for this chapter profiles a teacher who believes that study of a foreign language should go beyond knowledge of correct grammatical structures and rote



For each pair of statements about the teacher's role, circle the response that most closely reflects where you stand regarding the two perspectives. Remember, there are no correct responses, and neither perspective is better than the other.

### ***Constructivist Perspective***

### ***Transmission Perspective***

"I mainly see my role as a facilitator. I try to provide opportunities and resources for my students to discover or construct concepts for themselves."

**VS.**

"That's all nice, but students really won't learn the subject unless you go over the material in a structured way. It's my job to explain, to show students how to do the work, and to assign specific practice."

Definitely  
Prefer

Tend to  
Prefer

Cannot  
Decide

Tend to  
Prefer

Definitely  
Prefer

"It is a good idea to have all sorts of activities going on in the classroom. Some students might produce a scene from a play they read. Others might create a miniature version of the set. It's hard to get the logistics right, but the successes are so much more important than the failures."

**VS.**

"It's more practical to give the whole class the same assignment, one that has clear directions, and one that can be done in short intervals that match students' attention spans and the daily class schedule."

Definitely  
Prefer

Tend to  
Prefer

Cannot  
Decide

Tend to  
Prefer

Definitely  
Prefer

"The most important part of instruction is that it encourage 'sense-making' or thinking among students. Content is secondary."

**VS.**

"The most important part of instruction is the content of the curriculum. That content is the community's judgment about what children need to be able to know and do."

Definitely  
Prefer

Tend to  
Prefer

Cannot  
Decide

Tend to  
Prefer

Definitely  
Prefer

"It is critical for students to become interested in doing academic work—interest and effort are more important than the particular subject-matter they are working on."

**VS.**

"While student motivation is certainly useful, it should not drive what students study. It is more important that students learn the history, science, math, and language skills in their textbooks."

Definitely  
Prefer

Tend to  
Prefer

Cannot  
Decide

Tend to  
Prefer

Definitely  
Prefer

**FIGURE 4.2** Where do you stand?

Source: Adapted from Jason L. Ravitz, Henry Jay Becker, and Yan Tien Wong. *Constructivist-Compatible Beliefs and Practices Among U.S. Teachers*. Center for Research on Information Technology and Organizations, University of California, Irvine; and University of Minnesota, July 2000.

memorization of vocabulary words. For this teacher, the personal knowledge a student gains from cross-national communication is a valid goal for foreign language study.

### ***Beliefs About What Is Worth Knowing***

Teachers have different ideas about what should be taught. One teacher, who tends to prefer a transmission view of teaching, believes it is most important that students learn the basic skills of reading, writing, computation, and oral communication. These are the

## TECHNOLOGY

## ACTION

*Web Conferencing in 11th-Grade Chinese Language Class*

Louise Zhao has taught Advanced Chinese at Lincoln High School for the past 5 years. Her approach is part presentation and lots and lots of practice. Whenever possible, she tries to bring in native Chinese speakers to speak to her class, but this usually takes the form of a presentation. However, the presentation did not give her students what she was really after—to have her students engage in extensive one-on-one conversations with Chinese speakers.

Mrs. Zhao was born in Shanghai and still has family living there. She communicates with them often using various online communication tools, but it was not until she walked in on her 13-year-old son carrying on a video phone call with his cousin living in Shanghai that she realized she had the solution to her classroom dilemma. The next day she went to her principal and presented her idea. He agreed and she began to develop her lesson plan.

Through her family connections, she made contact with a high school teacher in Shanghai, Mr. Lee. He teaches English to Chinese students. The two teachers agreed that they would have their students meet once each week, for one hour, via Elluminate. Elluminate is web conferencing software that allows individuals or groups to conference via text, audio, and/or graphics online. The local community college had just purchased an Elluminate web conferencing license. As part of its community outreach, the community college allowed the local school district in its service area to use the tool. Each student in Mrs. Zhao's class would be paired with a student in Mr. Lee's class. During their one-hour Elluminate session, they would speak Chinese for the first 30 minutes and then speak English for the next 30 minutes. The session would also be recorded so Mr. Lee and Mrs. Zhao could review the individual conversations at a later time and provide feedback to their students.

To make this happen, however, Mrs. Zhao realized she had a lot to do. She had to schedule the weekly events—adjusting for time-zone differences. She had to pair the students, ensure that the students stayed on task, and create a setting conducive for one-on-one conversation.

Luckily for Mrs. Zhao, the school's computer lab was quite modern, and each computer in the lab had been fitted with microphone headsets. The headset speakers would keep

out external noise so that her 20-plus students seated in the computer lab could chat away and not disturb their neighbors. With the setting and technology taken care of, the next thing she had to deal with was timing. There was no way that she could make the timing of this event coincide within the hours of the standard school day. What she decided to do was make these events voluntary. To her surprise, all of her students agreed to attend the first session. At 4:00 P.M. each Thursday, her students would meet in the computer lab, click on their Elluminate session proposal, and connect with their counterparts in Shanghai, who were seated at their computers at 7:00 A.M. the next day, their time. This novelty was the first thing the students discussed. Although they are only halfway through the semester, the students appear each week for their conversations with their friends on the other side of the world.

**WEB CONFERENCING:** Web conferencing allows individuals or groups to connect on the Web via video and/or audio. This is usually a synchronous or live session in which individuals are seated at their computers and interact with others. Participants can be in the same building or in another country. To participate in a web videoconference, you will need a USB video input, a microphone, appropriate computer sound and video cards, the video conferencing software or plugin, and an Internet connection robust enough to handle a web conference.

**VISIT:** <http://thinkofit.com/webconf/index.htm>

This website offers thorough reviews of many web conferencing options.

**POSSIBLE USES:** Teachers have used web conferencing for tutoring sessions, meeting with parents, bringing outside speakers into their classroom, pursuing professional development opportunities, and connecting with colleagues around the country.

**TRY IT OUT:** There are many options to choose from if you would like to have your students participate in a web videoconference. If you visit the site listed above, you will have the opportunity to try many of them on a temporary basis for free. One easy web conferencing solution is Windows Messenger. Just open Messenger and click on Start Video Conversation. Type in the e-mail address of the person you want to conference with and you are connected.

skills they will need to be successful in their chosen occupations, and it is the school's responsibility to prepare students for the world of work. Another teacher believes that the most worthwhile content is to be found in the classics, or the Great Books. Through mastering the great ideas from the sciences, mathematics, literature, and history, students will be well prepared to deal with the world of the future. Still another teacher, one who tends toward a constructivist view of teaching, is most concerned with students learning how to reason, communicate effectively, and solve problems. Students who master these cognitive processes will have learned how to learn—and this is the most realistic preparation for an unknown future. And finally, another teacher is concerned with developing the whole child, teaching students to become self-actualizing persons. Thus, the content of the curriculum should be meaningful to the student, contributing as much as possible to the student's efforts to become a mature, well-integrated person. As you can see, there are no easy answers to the question, What knowledge is of most worth? Your beliefs about teaching and learning, students, knowledge, and what knowledge is worth knowing thus are the foundation of your educational philosophy. To reflect further on these beliefs, go to MyEducationLab and examine a "subtraction story" a young child wrote to show what she knows about numbers. Based on this example, what do you think this child's teacher believes about teaching and learning, students, knowledge, and what knowledge is worth knowing?

PERSON  
**myeducationlab**

Go to MyEducationLab, select Chapter 4 and then Activities and Applications to analyze the artifact Write a Subtraction Story.



## WHAT ARE THE BRANCHES OF PHILOSOPHY?

To provide you with additional tools to use in formulating and clarifying your educational philosophy, this section presents brief overviews of six areas of philosophy that are of central concern to teachers: metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, ethics, aesthetics, and logic. Each of these areas focuses on one of the questions that have concerned the world's greatest philosophers for centuries: What is the nature of reality? What is the nature of knowledge and is truth ever attainable? According to what values should one live life? What is good and what is evil? What is the nature of beauty and excellence? And finally, What processes of reasoning will yield consistently valid results?

### *Metaphysics*

**Metaphysics** is concerned with explaining, as rationally and as comprehensively as possible, the nature of reality (in contrast to how reality *appears*). What is reality? What is the world made of? These are metaphysical questions. Metaphysics is also concerned with the nature of being and explores questions such as, What does it mean to exist? What is humankind's place in the scheme of things? Metaphysical questions such as these are at the very heart of educational philosophy. As one educational philosopher put it, "nothing short of the fullest awareness possible of 'man's place in the cosmos' is the constant problem of the philosopher of education" (Bertocci, 1956, p. 158). Or as two educational philosophers put it: "Our ultimate preoccupation in educational theory is with the most primary of all philosophic problems: metaphysics, the study of ultimate reality" (Morris & Pai, 1994, p. 28).

Metaphysics has important implications for education because the school curriculum is based on what we know about reality. And what we know about reality is driven by the kinds of questions we ask about the world. In fact, any position regarding what the schools should teach has behind it a particular view of reality, a particular set of responses to metaphysical questions.

### *Epistemology*

The next major set of philosophical questions that concerns teachers is called **epistemology**. These questions all focus on knowledge: What knowledge is true? How does knowing take place? How do we know that we know? How do we decide between



opposing views of knowledge? Is truth constant, or does it change from situation to situation? And finally, What knowledge is of most worth?

How you answer the epistemological questions that confront all teachers will have significant implications for your teaching. First, you will need to determine what is true about the content you will teach, then you must decide on the most appropriate means of teaching this content to students. Even a casual consideration of epistemological questions reveals that there are many ways of knowing about the world, at least five of which are of interest to teachers.

1. **Knowing based on authority**—for example, knowledge from the sage, the poet, the priest, or the ruler. In schools, the textbook, the teacher, and the administrator are the sources of authority for students. In everyday conversations, we refer to unnamed experts as sources of authoritative knowledge: “*They say we’ll have a manned flight to Mars by the middle of the century.*”
2. **Knowing based on divine revelation**—for example, knowledge in the form of supernatural revelations from the sun god of early peoples, the many gods of the ancient Greeks, or the Judeo-Christian god.
3. **Knowing based on empiricism (experience)**—for example, knowledge acquired through the senses, the informally gathered empirical data that direct most of our daily behavior. When we state that experience is the best teacher, we refer to this mode of knowing.
4. **Knowing based on reason and logical analysis**—for example, knowledge inferred from the process of thinking logically. In schools, students learn to apply rational thought to tasks such as solving mathematical problems, distinguishing facts from opinions, or defending or refuting a particular argument. Many students also learn a method of reasoning and analyzing empirical data known as the scientific method. Through this method, a problem is identified, relevant data are gathered, a hypothesis is formulated based on these data, and the hypothesis is empirically tested.
5. **Knowing based on intuition**—for example, knowledge arrived at without the use of rational thought. Intuition draws from our prior knowledge and experience and gives us an immediate understanding of the situation at hand. Our intuition convinces us that we know something, but we don’t know how we know.

## Axiology

The next set of philosophical problems concerns values. Teachers are concerned with values “because school is not a neutral activity. The very idea of school expresses a set of values” (Nelson, Carlson, & Palonsky, 2000, p. 304).

Among the axiological questions teachers must answer for themselves are: What values should teachers encourage students to adopt? What values raise humanity to our highest expressions of humaneness? What values does a truly educated person hold?

**Axiology** highlights the fact that the teacher has an interest not only in the *quantity* of knowledge that students acquire but also in the *quality* of life that becomes possible because of that knowledge. Extensive knowledge may not benefit the individual if he or she is unable to put that knowledge to good use. This point raises additional questions: How do we define quality of life? What curricular experiences contribute most to that quality of life? All teachers must deal with the issues raised by these questions.

## Ethics

While axiology addresses the question, What is valuable? **ethics** focuses on, What is good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust?

Knowledge of ethics can help the teacher solve many of the dilemmas that arise in the classroom. Frequently, teachers must take action in situations where they are unable to gather all the relevant facts and where no single course of action is totally right

or wrong. For example, a student whose previous work was above average plagiarizes a term paper: Should the teacher fail the student for the course if the example of swift, decisive punishment will likely prevent other students from plagiarizing? Or should the teacher, following her hunches about what would be in the student's long-term interest, have the student redo the term paper and risk the possibility that other students might get the mistaken notion that plagiarism has no negative consequences? Another ethical dilemma: Is an elementary mathematics teacher justified in trying to increase achievement for the whole class by separating two disruptive girls and placing one in a mathematics group beneath her level of ability?

Ethics can provide the teacher with ways of thinking about problems where it is difficult to determine the right course of action. Ethics also helps teachers to understand that "ethical thinking and decision making are not just following the rules" (Strike & Soltis, 1985, p. 3). This chapter's Teachers' Voices: Research to Reality feature illustrates the lessons learned by one teacher after grappling with an ethical dilemma.

### Aesthetics

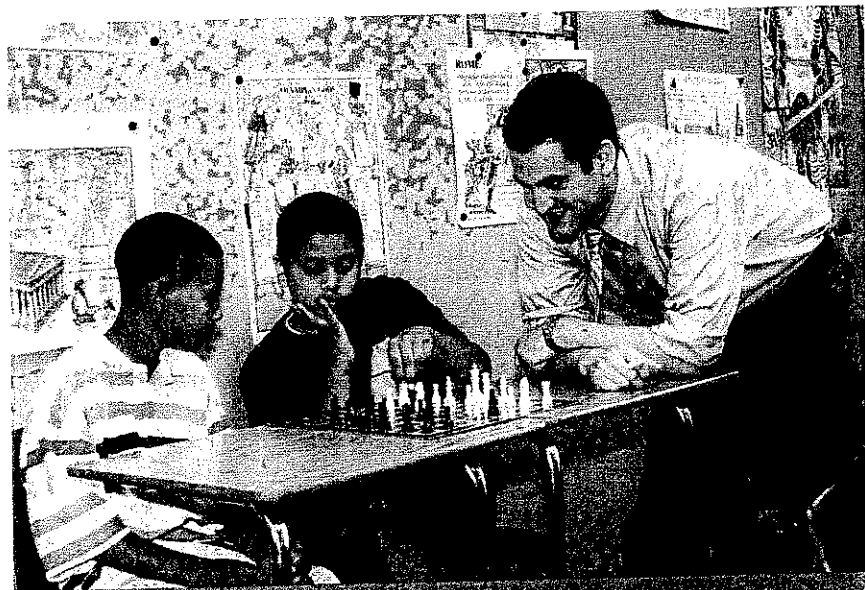
The branch of axiology known as **aesthetics** is concerned with values related to beauty and art. Although we expect that teachers of music, art, drama, literature, and writing regularly have students make judgments about the quality of works of art, we can easily overlook the role that aesthetics ought to play in *all* areas of the curriculum. Harry Broudy, a well-known educational philosopher, said that the arts are necessary, not "just nice" (1979, pp. 347–350). Through the heightening of their aesthetic perceptions, students can find increased meaning in all aspects of life.

Aesthetics can also help the teacher increase his or her effectiveness. Because it may be viewed as a form of artistic expression, teaching can be judged according to artistic standards of beauty and quality. In this regard, the teacher is an artist whose medium of expression is the spontaneous, unrehearsed, and creative encounter between teacher and student.

### Logic

**Logic** is the area of philosophy that deals with the process of reasoning and identifies rules that will enable the thinker to reach valid conclusions. The public is nearly unanimous in its belief that a key goal of education is to teach students how to think. The two kinds of logical thinking processes that teachers most frequently have students master are *deductive* and *inductive* thinking. The deductive approach requires the thinker to move from a general principle or proposition to a specific conclusion that is valid. By contrast, inductive reasoning moves from the specific to the general. Here, the student begins by examining particular examples that eventually lead to the acceptance of a general proposition. Inductive teaching is often referred to as discovery teaching—by which students discover, or create, their own knowledge of a topic.

Perhaps the best-known teacher to use the inductive approach to teaching was the Greek philosopher Socrates (ca. 470–399 B.C.). His method of teaching, known today as



How might this teacher be helping his students develop their logical thinking skills? With reference to the level and subject area for which you are preparing to teach, what activities can help students develop their ability to think logically?

# TEACHERS' VOICES RESEARCH TO REALITY

*Marcus Goodyear*

## DOLLARS AND POINTS

*Teacher Marcus Goodyear faced a dilemma after giving a student a grade of 50 for her final research paper because half of it was plagiarized. The research paper grade gave the student a six-weeks' grade of 69 (one point short of a passing grade of 70). The failing grade made the girl ineligible to compete in athletics. However, the teacher reflects on whether he made the "right" decision after meeting with the girl's upset parents and learning that the father has serious health problems.*

After almost a week, I asked my principal for advice. What would he do? I asked my department head. Miraculously neither of them had ever become cynical, and so I trusted them. "Give her the point," they said. "It isn't worth it to hold the line. They'll drag you to the school board. They'll make you look like the villain. They'll examine every minor grade under a microscope. Just give her the point and let her have a seventy."

On the grade change form I checked "teacher error." The student became eligible. She went on to the state competition that year. "What will you say to the people you beat?" I wanted to ask her. "What will you say to the students who had enough honor not to plagiarize their research papers?" But I swallowed my pride. I swallowed some of my moral self-righteousness. I even swallowed my anger at parents who will bully their way through teachers and administrators and anyone else standing between them and their entitlements. Because I hadn't known about her dad's health problems. If the girl had just told me that she thought her father might die, I would have given her extra time on the paper. I would have allowed more makeup work. I would have helped her. I should have helped her.

Part of me still felt like I was compromising academics for athletics. Part of me wanted to punish the student for the actions of her parents. But I learned an important lesson: Always err on the side of the student.

Because I do make mistakes, of course. I made a big mistake with that plagiarized paper—I assumed the worst of my student. I should have given the girl a chance to confess and rewrite the paper. Now I know to reward students for what they do well, rather than punish students for what they do poorly. Some students will need to face

consequences for their mistakes, but that can never become my focus as a teacher. It would destroy me. It would make me shrivel up into bitterness and indignation that the students, the teachers, the whole educational system was just going to hell. Everyone makes mistakes in the classroom, even me. That is what the classroom is for. And those mistakes will only make me worthless and vindictive if I remain proud and absolute. Like some one-room schoolhouse tyrant. Or like the cynics down the hall.

During that conference [with the girl's parents] I also realized that no amount of points brings value to a student's education. Passing my class, passing the state achievement test, even passing the Advanced Placement test were all based on an economic view of the world. These things reduce human actions and feelings to a few numbers—either test scores or the price of a college class. These things work as external rewards, but the biggest rewards are always internal. In addition to points, I can give my students respect and trust and confidence and faith. They need to become adults; they need me to treat them like adults.

Why would I treat them any other way?

Above all I finally realized that I teach for the students. Not their parents. Not my peers. Not even for myself or the paycheck at the end of every month. I teach for my students to rise above their mistakes.

And the mistakes of their teachers.

Some of them will. I know it.

## QUESTIONS

1. Based on his account of the plagiarism incident, what are Goodyear's views about the following elements of educational philosophy: Beliefs about teaching and learning? Beliefs about students? Beliefs about knowledge? Beliefs about what is worth knowing?
2. Why does Goodyear decide to change his student's grade? Do you agree or disagree with his decision? Why?
3. What ethical dilemmas might you encounter when you begin to teach? How will you resolve those ethical dilemmas?

Marcus Goodyear teaches at O'Connor High School in San Antonio, Texas. The preceding is excerpted from his chapter that appears in Molly Hoekstra (ed.), *Am I Teaching Yet? Stories from the Teacher-Training Trenches*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002, pp. 70–75.

The Socratic method, consisted of holding philosophical conversations (dialectics) with his pupils. **Socratic questioning** is a discussion that is characterized by the following:

- The discussion leader only asks questions.
- The discussion is systematic (not a free-for-all).
- The leader's questions direct the discussion.
- Everyone participates in an effort to "go beneath the surface" and to explore the complexities of the topic or issue under discussion.

The legacy of Socrates lives in all teachers who use Socratic questioning to encourage students to think for themselves. Figure 4.3 presents "The Art of Socratic Questioning checklist."

The next section examines philosophical orientations to teaching that have been developed in response to the branches of philosophy we have just examined.

The following list can be used to foster disciplined questioning on the part of students. Students might take turns leading Socratic discussions in groups. During the process, some students might be asked to observe the students leading the discussion, and then afterward provide feedback using the following guidelines (which all students should have a copy of during the discussion).

1. Did the questioner respond to all answers with another question?
2. Did the questioner make the *goal* of the discussion clear?  
(What is the goal of this discussion? What are we trying to accomplish?)
3. Did the questioner pursue relevant *information*?  
(What information are you basing that comment on? What experience convinced you of that?)
4. Did the questioner question *inferences*, interpretations, and conclusions where appropriate or significant?  
(How did you reach that conclusion? Could you explain your reasoning? Is there another possible interpretation?)
5. Did the questioner focus on key ideas or *concepts*?  
(What is the main idea you are putting forth? Could you explain that idea?)
6. Did the questioner note questionable *assumptions*?  
(What exactly are you taking for granted here? Why are you assuming that?)
7. Did the questioner question *implications* and consequences?  
(What are you implying when you say . . . ? Are you implying that . . . ? If people accepted your conclusion and then acted on it, what implications might follow?)
8. Did the questioner call attention to the *point of view* inherent in various answers?  
(From what point of view are you looking at this? Is there another point of view we should consider?)
9. Did the questioner keep the central *question* in focus?  
(I am not sure exactly what question you are raising. Could you explain it? Remember that the question we are dealing with is . . . .)
10. Did the questioner call for a clarification of *context*, when necessary?  
(Tell us more about the situation that has given rise to this problem. What was going on in this situation?)

FIGURE 4.3 The art of Socratic questioning checklist

Source: Richard Paul and Linda L. Elder. (2006). The Thinker's Guide to the Art of Socratic Questioning. Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking, p. 10.



## WHAT ARE FIVE MODERN PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATIONS TO TEACHING?

Five major coherent philosophical orientations to teaching have been developed in response to the questions concerning metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, ethics, aesthetics, and logic, with which all teachers must grapple. These orientations, or schools of thought, are perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, existentialism, and social reconstructionism. The following sections present a brief description of each of these orientations, moving from those that are teacher-centered to those that are student-centered (see Figure 4.4). Each description concludes with a sample portrait of a teacher whose behavior illustrates that philosophical orientation in action.

### *Perennialism*

As the term implies, **perennialism** views truth as constant, or perennial. The aim of education, according to perennialist thinking, is to ensure that students acquire knowledge of these unchanging principles or great ideas. Perennialists also believe that the natural world and human nature have remained basically unchanged over the centuries; thus, the great ideas continue to have the most potential for solving the problems of any era. Furthermore, the perennialist philosophy emphasizes the rational thinking abilities of human beings; it is the cultivation of the intellect that makes human beings truly human and differentiates them from other animals.

The curriculum, according to perennialists, should stress students' intellectual growth in the arts and sciences. To become culturally literate, students should encounter in these areas the best, most significant works that humans have created. In regard to any area of the curriculum, only one question needs to be asked: Are students acquiring content that represents humankind's most lofty accomplishments in that area? Thus, a high school English teacher would require students to read Melville's *Moby Dick* or any of Shakespeare's plays rather than a novel on the current best-seller list. Similarly, science students would learn about the three laws of motion or the three laws of thermodynamics rather than build a model of the space shuttle.

### Perennialist Educational Philosophers

Two of the best known advocates of the perennialist philosophy have been Robert Maynard Hutchins (1899–1977) and Mortimer Adler (1902–2001). As president of the University of Chicago, Hutchins (1963) developed an undergraduate curriculum based on the study of the Great Books and discussions of these classics in small seminars. Hutchins's perennialist curriculum was based on three assumptions about education:

1. Education must promote humankind's continuing search for truth. Whatever is true will always, and everywhere, be true; in short, truth is universal and timeless.

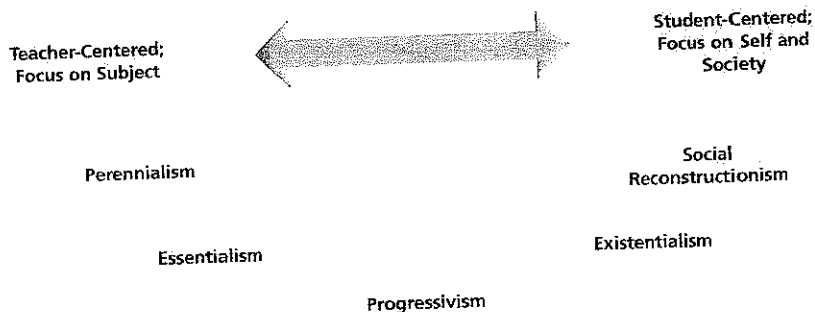


FIGURE 4.4 Five philosophical orientations to teaching

2. Because the mind's work is intellectual and focuses on ideas, education must also focus on ideas. The cultivation of human rationality is the essential function of education.
3. Education should stimulate students to think thoughtfully about significant ideas. Teachers should use correct and critical thinking as their primary method, and they should require the same of students.

Noted educational philosopher Mortimer Adler, along with Hutchins, was instrumental in organizing the Great Books of the Western World curriculum. Through the study of over 100 enduring classics, from Plato to Einstein, the Great Books approach aims at the major perennialist goal of teaching students to become independent and critical thinkers. It is a demanding curriculum, and it focuses on the enduring disciplines of knowledge rather than on current events or student interests.

### Portrait of a Perennialist Teacher

Mrs. Bernstein has been teaching English at the high school since the mid-1980s. Among students and teachers as well, she has a reputation for demanding a lot. As one student put it, "You don't waste time in Mrs. Bernstein's classes."

During the early 1990s, she had a difficult time dealing with students who aggressively insisted on being taught subjects that they called relevant. As a graduate of a top-notch university in the East, where she received a classical, liberal education, Mrs. Bernstein refused to lessen the emphasis in her classes on great works of literature that she felt students needed to know, such as *Beowulf* and the works of Chaucer, Dickens, and Shakespeare.

As far as her approach to classroom management is concerned, one student sums it up this way: "She doesn't let you get by with a thing; she never slacks off on the pressure. She lets you know that she's there to teach and you're there to learn." Mrs. Bernstein believes that hard work and effort are necessary if one is to get a good education. As a result, she gives students very few opportunities to misbehave, and she appears to be immune to the grumblings of students who do complain openly about the workload.

She becomes very animated when she talks about the value of the classics to students who are preparing to live as adults in the 21st century:

The classics are unequalled in terms of the insights they can give students into the major problems that they will have to deal with during their lifetimes. Though our civilization has made impressive technological advances during the last two centuries, we have not really progressed that much in terms of improving the quality of our lives as human beings. The observations of a Shakespeare or a Dickens on the human condition are just as relevant today as they were when they were alive.



Perennialist teachers often inspire students to seek truth, discover universalities in human experience, and celebrate the achievement of human civilization. How might this music lesson reflect perennialist ideas? How might the lesson be different if it were based on the essentialist educational philosophy?

### Essentialism

**Essentialism**, which has some similarities to perennialism, is a conservative philosophy of education originally formulated as a criticism of progressive trends in schools by William C. Bagley (1874–1946), a professor of education at Teachers College,



Columbia University. Bagley founded the Essentialistic Education Society and, to promote the society's views, the educational journal *School and Society*.

Essentialism holds that our culture has a core of common knowledge that the schools are obligated to transmit to students in a systematic, disciplined way. Unlike perennialists, who emphasize a set of external truths, essentialists stress what they believe to be the essential knowledge and skills (often termed "the basics") that productive members of our society need to know.

According to essentialist philosophy, schooling should be practical and provide children with sound instruction that prepares them for life; schools should not try to influence or set social policies. Critics of essentialism, however, charge that such a tradition-bound orientation to schooling will indoctrinate students and rule out the possibility of change. Essentialists respond that, without an essentialist approach, students will be indoctrinated in humanistic and/or behavioral curricula that run counter to society's accepted standards and need for order.

### Portrait of an Essentialist Teacher

Mr. Samuels teaches mathematics at a junior high school in a poor section of a major urban area. Prior to coming to this school six years ago, he taught at a rural elementary school.

Middle-aged and highly energetic, Mr. Samuels is known around the school as a hardworking, dedicated teacher. His commitment to children is especially evident when he talks about preparing "his" children for life in high school and beyond. "A lot of teachers nowadays have given up on kids," he says with a touch of sadness to his voice. "They don't demand much of them. If we don't push kids now to get the knowledge and skills they're going to need later in life, we've failed them. My main purpose here is to see that my kids get the basics they're going to need."

Mr. Samuels has made it known that he does not approve of the methods used by some of the younger, more humanistic-oriented teachers in the school. At a recent faculty meeting, for example, he was openly critical of some teachers' tendency to "let students do their own thing" and spend time "expressing their feelings." He called for all teachers to focus their energies on getting students to master subject-matter content, "the things kids will need to know," rather than on helping students adjust to the interpersonal aspects of school life. He also reminded everyone that "kids come to school to learn." All students would learn, he pointed out, if "teachers based their methods on good, sound approaches that have always worked—not on the so-called innovative approaches that are based on fads and frills."

Mr. Samuels's students have accepted his no-nonsense approach to teaching. With few exceptions, his classes are orderly and businesslike. Each class period follows a standard routine. Students enter the room quietly and take their seats with a minimum of the foolishness and horseplay that mark the start of many other classes in the school. As the first order of business, the previous day's homework is returned and reviewed. Following this, Mr. Samuels presents the day's lesson, usually a 15- to 20-minute explanation of how to solve a particular kind of math problem. His minilectures are lively, and his wide-ranging tone of voice and animated, spontaneous delivery convey his excitement about the material and his belief that students can learn. During large-group instruction, Mr. Samuels also makes ample use of a whiteboard, software such as Geometer's Sketchpad, and manipulatives such as a large abacus and colored blocks of different sizes and shapes.

### Progressivism

**Progressivism** is based on the belief that education should be child-centered rather than focused on the teacher or the content area. The writing of John Dewey (1859–1952) in the 1920s and 1930s contributed a great deal to the spread of progressive ideas. Briefly, Deweyan progressivism is based on the following three central assumptions:

1. The content of the curriculum ought to be derived from students' interests rather than from the academic disciplines.

2. Effective teaching takes into account the whole child and his or her interests and needs in relation to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor areas.
3. Learning is essentially active rather than passive.

### Progressive Strategies

The progressive philosophy also contends that knowledge that is true in the present may not be true in the future. Hence, the best way to prepare students for an unknown future is to equip them with problem-solving strategies that will enable them to discover meaningful knowledge at various stages of their lives. Teachers with a progressive orientation give students a considerable amount of freedom in determining their school experiences. Contrary to the perceptions of many, however, progressive education does not mean that teachers do not provide structure or that students are free to do whatever they wish. Progressive teachers begin with where students are and, through the daily give-and-take of the classroom, lead students to see that the subject to be learned can enhance their lives.

In a progressively oriented classroom, the teacher serves as a guide or resource person whose primary responsibility is to facilitate student learning. The teacher helps students learn what is important to them rather than passing on a set of so-called enduring truths. Toward this end, the progressive teacher tries to provide students with experiences that replicate everyday life as much as possible. Students have many opportunities to work cooperatively in groups, often solving problems that the group, not the teacher, has identified as important. To understand how a progressive teaching philosophy emphasizes students' interests, go to MyEducationLab and examine a young student's attempt to write the Pledge of Allegiance from memory. How might an assignment related to the Pledge of Allegiance look different if it was developed by a teacher with a progressive educational philosophy?

myeducationlab

Go to MyEducationLab, select Chapter 4 and then Activities and Applications to analyze the artifact Pledge of Allegiance (Language Arts 3–5).

### Portrait of a Progressive Teacher

Mr. Barkan teaches social studies at a middle school in a well-to-do part of the city. Boyishly handsome and in his mid-thirties, Mr. Barkan usually works in casual attire—khaki pants, soft-soled shoes, and a sports shirt. He seems to get along well with students. Mr. Barkan likes to give students as much freedom of choice in the classroom as possible. Accordingly, his room is divided into interest and activity centers, and much of the time students are free to choose where they want to spend their time. One corner at the back of the room has a library collection of paperback and hardcover books, an easy chair, and an area rug; the other back corner of the room is set up as a project area and has a worktable on which are several globes, maps, large sheets of newsprint, and assorted drawing materials. At the front of the room in one corner is a small media center with a computer and flat-screen monitor, laser printer, and DVD/VCR.



What hallmarks of progressive education are evident in this photograph of one of the first classrooms in the country operated according to Dewey's philosophy? What would a progressive classroom look like today?

Mr. Barkan makes it a point to establish warm, supportive relationships with his students. He is proud of the fact that he is a friend to his

students. "I really like the kids I teach," he says in a soft, gentle voice. "They're basically good kids, and they really want to learn if we teachers, I mean, can just keep their curiosity alive and not try to force them to learn. It's up to us as teachers to capitalize on their interests."

The visitor to Mr. Barkan's class today can sense his obvious regard for students. He is genuinely concerned about the growth and nurturance of each one. As his students spend most of their time working in small groups at the various activity centers in the room, Mr. Barkan divides his time among the groups. He moves from group to group and seems to immerse himself as an equal participant in each group's task. One group, for example, has been working on making a papier-mâché globe. Several students are explaining animatedly to him how they plan to transfer the flat map of the world they have drawn to the smooth sphere they have fashioned out of the papier-mâché. Mr. Barkan listens carefully to what his students have to say and then congratulates the group on how cleverly they have engineered the project. When he speaks to his students, he does so in a matter-of-fact, conversational tone, as though speaking to other adults.

As much as possible he likes to bring textbook knowledge to life by providing his students with appropriate experiences—field trips, small-group projects, simulation activities, role-playing, Internet explorations, and so on. Mr. Barkan believes that his primary function as a teacher is to prepare his students for an unknown future. Learning to solve problems at an early age is the best preparation for this future, he feels.

The increase in the amount of knowledge each decade is absolutely astounding. What we teach students as true today will most likely not be true tomorrow. Therefore, students have to learn how to learn and become active problem-solvers. In addition, students need to learn how to identify problems that are meaningful to them. It doesn't make much sense to learn to solve problems that belong to someone else. To accomplish these things in the classroom, teachers have to be willing to take the lead from the students themselves—to use their lives as a point of departure for learning about the subject. What this requires of the teacher is that he or she be willing to set up the classroom along the lines of a democracy, a close community of learners whose major purpose for being there is to learn. You can't create that kind of classroom atmosphere by being a taskmaster and trying to force kids to learn. If you can trust them and let them set their own directions, they'll respond.

## Existentialism

Existential philosophy is unique because it focuses on the experiences of the individual. Other philosophies are concerned with developing systems of thought for identifying and understanding what is common to *all* reality, human existence, and values. **Existentialism**, on the other hand, offers the individual a way of thinking about *my* life, what has meaning for *me*, what is true for *me*. In general, existentialism emphasizes creative choice, the subjectivity of human experiences, and concrete acts of human existence over any rational scheme for human nature or reality. To understand how existentialism can influence teaching, go to MyEducationLab and examine a teacher's assignment that gives students a variety of options to show their knowledge of a book they have read. In what ways does this assignment reflect an existential approach to teaching?

The writings of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), well-known French philosopher, novelist, and playwright, have been most responsible for the widespread dissemination of existential ideas. According to Sartre (1972), every individual first exists, and then he or she must decide what that existence is to mean. The task of assigning meaning to that existence is the individual's alone; no preformulated philosophical belief system can tell one who one is. It is up to each of us to decide who we are. According to Sartre, "Existence precedes essence. . . . First of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself" (1972, p. 98).

**PEARSON**  
**myeducationlab**

Go to MyEducationLab, select Chapter 4 and then Activities and Applications to analyze the artifact Why We Study History (Social Studies 3–5).

Life, according to existential thought, has no meaning, and the universe is indifferent to the situation humankind finds itself in. Moreover, "existentialists [believe] that too many people wrongly emphasize the optimistic, the good, and the beautiful—all of which create a false impression of existence" (Ozmon & Craver, 2007). With the freedom that we have, however, each of us must commit ourselves to assign meaning to his or her *own* life. As Maxine Greene, who has been described as "the preeminent American philosopher of education today" (Ayers & Miller, 1998, p. 4), "We have to know about our lives, clarify our situations if we are to understand the world from our shared standpoints" (1995, p. 21). The human enterprise that can be most helpful in promoting this personal quest for meaning is the educative process. Therefore, teachers must allow students freedom of choice and provide them with experiences that will help them find the meaning of their lives. This approach, contrary to the belief of many, does not mean that students may do whatever they please; logic indicates that freedom has rules, and respect for the freedom of others is essential.

Existentialists judge the curriculum according to whether it contributes to the individual's quest for meaning and results in a level of personal awareness that Greene terms wide-awakeness. As Greene (1995b, pp. 149–150) suggests, the ideal curriculum is one that provides students with extensive individual freedom and requires them to ask their own questions, conduct their own inquiries, and draw their own conclusions: "To feel oneself en route, to feel oneself in a place where there are always possibilities of clearings, of new openings, this is what we must communicate to the young if we want to awaken them to their situation and enable them to make sense of and to name their worlds." The Teaching on Your Feet feature in this chapter illustrates how one teacher with an existential point of view enabled a student to become more "wide awake" and to find meaning in his life.

### Existentialism and Postmodernism

A philosophical orientation that has received increased attention since the 1980s, **postmodernism** has many similarities with existentialism. Postmodern thinking influences the curriculum content and instructional strategies some teachers use.

Postmodernists challenge the metaphysical views—or explanations of "reality"—that are presented in many textbooks. These books, they claim, present a "historically constructed" view of reality that gives advantages to some persons and groups in our society (white males, for example), while it marginalizes others (people of color, women, and unskilled workers, for example).

Postmodernist educators are critical of school curricula that advance the perspectives of dominant groups and ignore other "voices." They point out, for example, that some history books, written from a Eurocentric perspective, state that Columbus "discovered" a "New World." The people who lived in what is now the United States centuries before the arrival of Columbus, of course, have a very different perspective because their native cultures endured disease, genocide, and forced assimilation at the hands of the Europeans.

Similarly, English teachers with a postmodern orientation point out that most of the literature students are required to read has been written by "dead white males" (Shakespeare, Melville, and Hawthorne, for example). Students seldom have opportunities to read the "voices" of authors who represent women, people of color, and writers from developing countries.

In general, postmodernists believe there are no absolute truths. Postmodernism disputes the certainty of scientific, or objective, explanations of reality. In addition, postmodernism is skeptical of explanations that claim to be true for all groups, cultures, traditions, or races. Similar to existentialists, postmodernists emphasize what is true for the individual. Reality is based on our interpretations of what the world means to us individually. Postmodernism emphasizes concrete experience over abstract principles.

Postmodernism is "post" because it rejects the "modern" belief that there are scientific, philosophical, and religious truths. Postmodernists believe there are many truths, and many different voices that need to be heard.

## TEACHING ON YOUR FEET

## OPENING THE GATES

Reading the world precedes reading the word.

—Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo

*Literacy: Reading the Word and the World (1987)*



It is said that mathematics, and especially algebra, is the greatest of gatekeepers. Indeed, it is the subject that prevents most students from aspiring to higher education. I teach mathematics at a school that is mostly comprised of students of color (75 percent Hispanic, 8 percent African American).

Here, roughly 50 to 60 percent of the students will manage to graduate within their four years. Furthermore, less than 20 percent of those that do graduate go on to pursue a four-year college degree. Needless to say, as a teacher of Mexican descent, my teaching and the learning of mathematics is a personal endeavor.

A few years ago, I took my geometry class on an excursion throughout our campus. We were studying shapes and their angles. Students sketched and described the geometrical relationships of the school's buildings and their features. My objective for my students was to allow them to discover not only the usefulness of mathematics but its liberating power to those who can maneuver through it and make it their own. I wanted to empower them to move past academic barriers to a life with more choices. As my students scattered to explore and investigate the architectural geometry that is our school, two boys asked me if they could simply go back to the classroom. They saw no point in the activity. They were bored.

Rather than have them meander back to our classroom and cause any disruptions, I asked them what is it that they saw besides a cluster of impersonal and innate objects such as buildings. They looked dumbfounded at my odd question. "What do you mean?" they asked me. "Look around you. Who is always cleaning the trash and filth that the students carelessly leave behind after lunch? And now think who is in the office making decisions about your education?" I did not have to say much after that. The

point of my questions was clear to the boys as they saw men who looked like them cleaning the campus.

## ANALYSIS

As teachers, it is difficult to see if we have made a difference in the young minds that are entrusted to us. We may plant seeds that never flower but we may also one day, in the distant future, see the blossom of that seed. Years later, one of the boys who had seen no point in school came back to visit me. He was a freshman at Cal Poly University in Pomona. As we talked, our conversation traveled back to that one day when the class was exploring the geometry of the school. He asked me if I remembered what I had told him. I recounted the basic story but I was surprised when he quoted me: "There are two kinds of people in this world: those who own the building and those who clean it. Your education will determine who you become." Even though I had forgotten I had said those specific words to him, he had obviously internalized them. As he left, a wide grin on his face, he said: "I want to use my body from the neck up rather than from the neck down."

I guess those seeds we plant can sometimes take root and eventually build the foundation of our students' character. It is that tender hope in this truth that gives life to our teacher's heart . . . our spirit. As we come to believe in this, we become the guardians of our students' hope and dreams.

## REFLECTION

- What are some other gate-keeping academic subjects that may limit students' life choices if they do not master them?
- How could a teacher who is not of Mexican descent handle a similar situation without offending the students?
- What guest speakers could a teacher invite to motivate students to persist through studies that currently seem meaningless to them?

**Sergio Mora**  
Montclair High School

To answer these questions online, go to MyEducationLab at [www.myeducationlab.com](http://www.myeducationlab.com), select the Activities and Application section, and click on this chapter's Teaching on Your Feet.

Postmodernists maintain that knowledge is invented or constructed in the minds of people, not discovered as modernists claim. Thus, the knowledge that teachers teach and students learn does not necessarily correspond to reality. Instead, that knowledge is a human construction. Knowledge, ideas, and language are created by people, not because they are true but because they are useful.

According to postmodernists, reality is a story. Reality exists only in the minds of those who perceive it. As a result, no version of reality can claim to be the truth because versions of reality are merely human creations.

### Portrait of an Existentialist Teacher

After he started teaching English eight years ago at a suburban high school, Fred Winston began to have doubts about the value of what he was teaching students. Although he could see a limited, practical use for the knowledge and skills he was teaching, he felt he was doing little to help his students answer the most pressing questions of their lives. Also, Fred had to admit to himself that he had grown somewhat bored with following the narrow, unimaginative Board of Education curriculum guides.

During the next eight years, Fred gradually developed a style of teaching that placed emphasis on students finding out who they are. He continued to teach the knowledge covered on the achievement test mandated by his state, but he made it clear that what students learned from him, they should use to answer questions that were important to them. Now, for example, he often gives writing assignments that encourage students to look within in order to develop greater self-knowledge. He often uses assigned literature as a springboard for values clarification discussions. And whenever possible, he gives his students the freedom to pursue individual reading and writing projects. His only requirement is that students be meaningfully involved in whatever they do.

Fred is also keenly aware of how the questions his students are just beginning to grapple with are questions that he is still, even in his mid-thirties, trying to answer for himself. Thoughtfully and with obvious care for selecting the correct words, he sums up the goals that he has for his students:

I think kids should realize that the really important questions in life are beyond definitive answers, and they should be very suspicious of anyone—teacher, philosopher, or member of organized religion—who purports to have the answers. As human beings, each of us faces the central task of finding *our own* answers to such questions. My students know that I'm wrestling with the same questions they're working on. But I think I've taught them well enough so that they know that my answers can't be their answers.

Fred's approach to teaching is perhaps summed up by the bumper sticker on the sports car he drives: "Question authority." Unlike many of his fellow teachers, he wants his students to react critically and skeptically to what he teaches them. He also presses them to think thoughtfully and courageously about the meaning of life, beauty, love, and death. He judges his effectiveness by the extent to which students are able and willing to become more aware of the choices that are open to them.

### *Social Reconstructionism*

As the term implies, **social reconstructionism** holds that schools should take the lead in changing or reconstructing the current social order. Theodore Brameld (1904–1987), acknowledged as the founder of social reconstructionism, based his philosophy on two fundamental premises about the post-World War II era: (1) We live in a period of great crisis, most evident in the fact that humans now have the capability of destroying civilization overnight, and (2) humankind also has the intellectual, technological, and moral potential to create a world civilization of "abundance, health, and humane capacity" (Brameld, 1959, p. 19). In this time of great need, then, the schools should become the primary agent for planning and directing social change. In short, schools should not only *transmit* knowledge about the existing social order; they should seek to *reconstruct* it as well.



### Social Reconstructionism and Progressivism

Social reconstructionism has clear ties to progressive educational philosophy. Both provide opportunities for extensive interaction between teacher and students and among students themselves. Furthermore, both place a premium on bringing the community, if not the entire world, into the classroom. Student experiences often include field trips, community-based projects of various sorts, and opportunities to interact with persons beyond the four walls of the classroom.

A social reconstructionist curriculum is arranged to highlight the need for various social reforms and, whenever possible, allow students to have firsthand experiences in reform activities. Teachers realize that they can play a significant role in the control and resolution of these problems, that they and their students need not be buffeted about like pawns by these crises.

According to Brameld and social reconstructionists such as George Counts, who wrote *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (1932), schools should provide students with methods for dealing with the significant crises that confront the world: war, economic depression, international terrorism, hunger, natural disasters, inflation, and ever-accelerating technological advances. The logical outcome of such education would be the eventual realization of a worldwide democracy (Brameld, 1956). Unless we actively seek to create this kind of world through the intelligent application of present knowledge, we run the risk that the destructive forces of the world will determine the conditions under which humans will live in the future.

### Portrait of a Social Reconstructionist Teacher

At the urban high school where she teaches social studies and history, Martha Perkins has the reputation for being a social activist. On first meeting her, she presents a casual and laid-back demeanor. Her soft voice and warm smile belie the intensity of her convictions about pressing world issues, from international terrorism and hunger to peaceful uses of space and the need for all humans to work toward a global community.

During the early 1970s, Martha participated as a high school student in several protests against the war in Vietnam. This also marked the beginning of her increased awareness of the need for social justice in society. Like many young people of that era, Martha vigorously supported a curriculum that focused on students understanding these inequities and identifying resources that might eliminate them from society. Before she graduated from high school, Martha had formulated a vision of a healthier, more just society, and she vowed to do what she could to make that vision become a reality during her lifetime.

Martha feels strongly about the importance of having students learn about social problems as well as discovering what they can do about them. "It's really almost immoral if I confront my students with a social problem and then we fail to do anything about it," she says. "Part of my responsibility as a teacher is to raise the consciousness level of my students in regard to the problems that confront all human beings. I want them to leave my class with the realization that they can make a difference when it comes to making the world a more humane place."

For Martha to achieve her goals as a teacher, she frequently has to tackle controversial issues—issues that many of her colleagues avoid in the classroom. She feels that students would not learn how to cope with problems or controversy if she were to avoid them.

I'm not afraid of controversy. When confronted with controversy, some teachers do retreat to the safety of the more "neutral" academic discipline. However, I try to get my students to see how they can use the knowledge of the discipline to work for social justice. So far, I've gotten good support from the principal. She's backed me up on several controversial issues that we've looked at in class: the nuclear energy plant that was to be built here in this county, the right to die, and absentee landlords who own property in the poorer sections of the city.

Two additional philosophical orientations may be placed under the broad umbrella of social reconstructionism—critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy. These orientations have a significant influence on the curriculum content some teachers emphasize and the instructional strategies they use. The following sections provide brief descriptions of these orientations.

### Critical Pedagogy

Much like social reconstructionism, **critical pedagogy** focuses on how education can promote **social justice**, especially for those who do not enjoy positions of power and influence in society. Critical pedagogy teaches students how to identify and to understand the complexities of social injustice. It gives them “the tools to better themselves and strengthen democracy, to create a more egalitarian and just society, and thus to deploy education in a process of progressive social change” (Kellner, 2000).

One educator who advocated critical pedagogy was Paulo Freire (1921–1997). He spent his childhood in the comfort of the Brazilian middle class. However, he encountered poverty when his father lost his job as a military officer during the economic crisis of 1929 (Smith & Smith, 1994). That experience “led him to make a vow, at age eleven, to dedicate his life to the struggle against hunger, so that other children would not have to know the agony he was then experiencing.” It also led him to understand what he described as “the culture of silence’ of the dispossessed” (Freire, 1970, p. 10). The difficulty poor people encountered when they tried to improve the quality of their lives he attributed to the physical conditions of poverty and to a deep sense that they were not entitled to move beyond their plight. Freire also believed that paternalism embedded in the political and educational systems led to inequality of opportunity. “Rather than being encouraged and equipped to know and respond to the concrete realities of their world, they (poor students) were kept ‘submerged’ in a situation in which such critical awareness and response were practically impossible” (Freire, 1970, p. 11).

Freire regarded education, and particularly literacy, as the best way to improve the quality of one’s life. Influenced by numerous philosophers, psychologists, and political thinkers, including Sartre, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr., he developed a philosophy of education for his doctoral dissertation in 1959. His dissertation provided the basis for his now internationally famous book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The key premise of his book is that “human interaction rarely escapes oppression of one kind or another; by reason of class, race, or gender, people tend to be victims and/or perpetrators of oppression” (Torres, 1994, p. 181). His approach to education “calls for dialogue and ultimately conscientization—critical consciousness or awareness—as a way to overcome relationships of domination and oppression” (Torres, 1994, p. 187).

Freire contrasted his pedagogy with what he described as a “banking” concept of education—teachers “deposit” their knowledge into empty “accounts” (their students). Freire’s success in working with poor, illiterate adults in Northern Brazil was so great that he was regarded as a threat to the existing political order. He was imprisoned and eventually exiled.

### Feminist Pedagogy

According to an advocate of **feminist pedagogy** and a teacher at an elementary school in Indiana, schools “serve the power of dominant ideologies and beliefs” (Scerif, 1997, p. 62). To ensure the growth and well-being of *all* students in a society dominated by the beliefs and perspectives of white males, then, “feminist pedagogy challenges the emphasis on efficiency and objectivity that perpetuate the domination of masculine rationality. . . . The role of schools in perpetuating unequal social, cultural, political, and economic realities is a central theme of [feminist pedagogy]” (Scerif, 1997, p. 62). Thus, the goal of feminist pedagogy is to create caring communities of engaged learners who respect differences and work collaboratively to make democracy a reality for all classes of people.

A leading advocate for feminist pedagogy is bell hooks (she does not use capital letters in her name). According to hooks,

Feminist education—the feminist classroom—is and should be a place where there is a sense of struggle, where there is a visible acknowledgment of the union of theory and practice, where we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm. . . . Most importantly, feminist pedagogy should engage students in a learning process that makes the world “more real than less real.” (hooks, 1989, p. 51)

In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, hooks (1994, p. 12) states that education should be viewed as “the practice of freedom, [and] more than ever before . . . educators are compelled to confront the biases that have shaped teaching practices in our society and to create new ways of knowing, different strategies for the sharing of knowledge.” hooks (2003, p. xv) also maintains that the classroom should be “a place that is life-sustaining and mind-expanding, a place of liberating mutuality where teacher and student together work in partnership.”

Advocates of feminist pedagogy point out that different voices and different ways of knowing tend not to be acknowledged in classrooms dominated by Eurocentric, patriarchal curricula. hooks (2003, p. 3), for example, calls for the “decolonisation of ways of knowing.”

Another well-known advocate of feminist pedagogy and a scholar instrumental in developing the legal definition of sexual harassment, Catharine MacKinnon (1994), explains how what is viewed as *the truth* in our society is determined by those in positions of power: “Having power means, among other things, that when someone says, ‘this is how it is,’ it is taken as being that way. . . . Powerlessness means that when you say, ‘this is how it is,’ it is not taken as being that way. This makes articulating silence, perceiving the presence of absence, believing those who have been socially stripped of credibility, critically contextualizing what passes for simple fact, necessary to the epistemology of a politics of the powerless.”



## WHAT PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS HAVE INFLUENCED TEACHING PHILOSOPHIES?

In addition to the five philosophical orientations to teaching described in previous sections of this chapter, several schools of psychological thought have formed the basis for teaching philosophies. These psychological theories are comprehensive worldviews that serve as the basis for the way many teachers approach teaching practice. Psychological orientations to teaching are concerned primarily with understanding the conditions that are associated with effective learning. In other words, what motivates students to learn? What environments are most conducive to learning? Chief among the psychological orientations that have influenced teaching philosophies are humanistic psychology, behaviorism, and constructivism.

### *Humanistic Psychology*

**Humanistic psychology** emphasizes personal freedom, choice, awareness, and personal responsibility. As the term implies, it also focuses on the achievements, motivation, feelings, actions, and needs of human beings. The goal of education, according to this orientation, is individual self-actualization.

Humanistic psychology is derived from the philosophy of **humanism**, which developed during the European Renaissance and Protestant Reformation and is based on the belief that individuals control their own destinies through the application of their intelligence and learning. People “make themselves.” The term *secular humanism* refers to the closely related belief that the conditions of human existence relate to human nature and human actions rather than to predestination or divine intervention.

In the 1950s and 1960s, humanistic psychology became the basis of educational reforms that sought to enhance students' achievement of their full potential through self-actualization (Maslow, 1954, 1962; Rogers, 1961). According to this psychological orientation, teachers should not force students to learn; instead, they should create a climate of trust and respect that allows students to decide what and how they learn, to question authority, and to take initiative in "making themselves." Teachers should be what noted psychologist Carl Rogers calls facilitators, and the classroom should be a place "in which curiosity and the natural desire to learn can be nourished and enhanced" (1982, p. 31). Through their nonjudgmental understanding of students, humanist teachers encourage students to learn and grow.

### Portrait of a Humanist Teacher

Ten years ago, Carol Alexander began teaching at a small rural middle school—a position she enjoys because the school's small size enables her to develop close relationships with her students and their families. Her teaching style is based on humane, open interpersonal relationships with her students, and she takes pride in the fact that students trust her and frequently ask her advice on problems common to children in early adolescence. The positive rapport Carol has developed with her students is reflected in the regularity with which former students return to visit or to seek her advice.

Carol is also committed to empowering her students, to giving them opportunities to shape their learning experiences. As she puts it: "I encourage students to give me feedback about how they feel in my classroom. They have to feel good about themselves before they can learn. Also, I've come to realize that students should help us (teachers) plan. I've learned to ask them what they're interested in. 'What do you want to do?' 'How do you want to do it?'"

Much of Carol's teaching is based on classroom discussions in which she encourages students to share openly their ideas and feelings about the subject at hand. Carol's interactions with students reveal her skill at creating a conversational environment that makes students feel safe and willing to contribute. During discussions, Carol listens attentively to students and frequently paraphrases their ideas in a way that acknowledges their contributions. She frequently responds with short phrases that indicate support and encourage the student to continue the discussion, such as the following: "I see. Would you say more about that?" "That is an interesting idea; tell us more."

When Carol is not facilitating a whole-group discussion, she is more than likely moving among the small cooperative-learning groups she has set up. Each group decided how to organize itself to accomplish a particular learning task—developing a strategy for responding to a threat to the environment or analyzing a poem about brotherhood, for example. "I think it's important for students to learn to work together, to help one another, and to accept different points of view," says Carol.

## Behaviorism

**Behaviorism** is based on the principle that desirable human behavior can be the product of design rather than accident. According to behaviorists, it is an illusion to say that humans have a free will. Although we may act as if we are free, our behavior is really determined by forces in the environment that shape our behavior. "We are what we are and we do what we do, not because of any mysterious power of human volition, but because outside forces over which we lack any semblance of control have us caught in an inflexible web. Whatever else we may be, we are not the captains of our fate or the masters of our soul" (Power, 1982, p. 168).

### Founders of Behavioristic Psychology

John B. Watson (1878–1958) was the principal originator of behavioristic psychology and B. F. Skinner (1904–1990) its best-known promoter. Watson first claimed that human behavior consisted of specific stimuli that resulted in certain responses. In part, he based this new conception of learning on the classic experiment conducted by Russian

psychologist Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936). Pavlov had noticed that a dog he was working with would salivate when it was about to be given food. By introducing the sound of a bell when food was offered and repeating this several times, Pavlov discovered that the sound of the bell alone (a conditioned stimulus) would make the dog salivate (a conditioned response). Watson was so confident that all learning conformed to this basic stimulus-response model (now termed classical or type S conditioning) that he once boasted, “Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in, and I’ll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggarman and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors” (Watson, 1925, p. 82).

Skinner went beyond Watson’s basic stimulus-response model and developed a more comprehensive view of conditioning known as operant (or type R) conditioning. Operant conditioning is based on the idea that satisfying responses are conditioned, unsatisfying ones are not. In other words, “The things we call pleasant have an energizing or strengthening effect on our behaviour” (Skinner, 1972, p. 74). Thus, the teacher can create learners who exhibit desired behaviors by following four steps:

1. Identify desired behaviors in concrete (observable and measurable) terms.
2. Establish a procedure for recording specific behaviors and counting their frequencies.
3. For each behavior, identify an appropriate reinforcer.
4. Ensure that students receive the reinforcer as soon as possible after displaying a desired behavior.

### Portrait of a Behaviorist Teacher

Jane Day teaches fourth grade at a school with an enrollment of about 500 in a small midwestern town. Now in her fifth year at the school, Jane has spent the last three years developing and refining a systematic approach to teaching. Last year, the success of her methods was confirmed when her students received the highest scores on the state’s annual basic skills test.

Her primary method is individualized instruction, wherein students proceed at their own pace through modules she has put together. The modules cover five major areas: reading, writing, mathematics, general science, and spelling. She is working on a sixth module, geography, but it won’t be ready until next year. She has developed a complex point system to keep track of students’ progress and to motivate them to higher levels of achievement. The points students accumulate entitle them to participate in various in-class activities: free reading, playing with the many games and puzzles in the room, drawing or painting in the art corner, or playing videogames on one of the two personal computers in the room.

Jane has tried to convert several other teachers at the school to her behavioristic approach, and she is eager to talk to anyone who will listen about the effectiveness of her systematic approach to instruction. When addressing this topic, her exuberance is truly exceptional: “It’s really quite simple. Students just do much better if you tell them exactly what you want them to know and then reward them for learning it.”

In regard to the methods employed by some of her colleagues, Jane can be rather critical. She knows some teachers in the school who teach by a trial-and-error method and “aren’t clear about where they’re going.” She is also impatient with those who talk about the “art” of teaching; in contrast, everything that she does as a teacher is done with precision and a clear sense of purpose. “Through careful design and management of the learning environment,” she says, “a teacher can get the results that he or she wants.”

### Constructivism

In contrast to behaviorism, constructivism focuses on processes of learning rather than on learning behavior. According to **constructivism**, students use cognitive processes to *construct* understanding of the material to be learned—in contrast to the view that

they *receive* information transmitted by the teacher. Constructivist approaches support student-centered rather than teacher-centered curriculum and instruction. The student is the key to learning.

Unlike behaviorists who concentrate on directly observable behavior, constructivists focus on the mental processes and strategies that students use to learn. Our understanding of learning has been extended as a result of advances in **cognitive science**—the study of the mental processes students use in thinking and remembering. By drawing from research in linguistics, psychology, anthropology, neurophysiology, and computer science, cognitive scientists are developing new models for how people think and learn.

Teachers who base classroom activities on constructivism know that learning is an active, meaning-making process, that learners are not passive recipients of information. In fact, students are continually involved in making sense out of activities around them. Thus, the teacher must *understand students' understanding* and realize that students' learning is influenced by prior knowledge, experience, attitudes, and social interactions. Chapter 10 explains further the common elements of constructivist teaching.



These children are active learners in a real or relevant context, constructing their own meanings through direct experience. How might this lesson be seen as an eclectic blend of progressive, existential, and constructivist ideals?

### Portrait of a Constructivist Teacher

Lisa Sanchez teaches English at a middle school in a large midwestern city. The walls of her classroom are decorated with students' work—poetry, drawings, and students' writing reflecting various stages of the writing process: prewriting, revising, and final drafts.

Working in five groups, four students in each group, Lisa's eighth-grade students are translating *Romeo and Juliet* into modern English. Each group is translating a different act. Later, each group of students will choose a scene to enact, after designing a set and contemporary costumes. Lisa points out that her students will have to make decisions regarding the most appropriate costumes for each character based on their understanding of Shakespeare's play. "I want them to understand how *Romeo and Juliet* is relevant even today."

As students discuss the most appropriate translation line by line, Lisa moves from group to group. She asks clarifying questions and provides encouragement as students work to understand the meaning of Shakespeare's words.

At the end of class, Lisa explains her approach to teaching: "My teaching is definitely student-centered. I try to create a democratic classroom environment. My students are actively involved in creating meaning and knowledge for themselves. They do a lot of work in small groups, and they learn to question, investigate, hypothesize, and invent. They have to make connections between what they already know and new knowledge."



### HOW CAN YOU DEVELOP YOUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY?

As you read the preceding brief descriptions of five educational philosophies and three psychological orientations to teaching, perhaps you felt that no single philosophy fit perfectly with your idea of the kind of teacher you want to become. Or there may have been some element of each approach that seemed compatible with your





## Walk in My Shoes



Phil Kuras, a ninth- to eleventh-grade history and literature teacher at Red Rock High School in Sedona, Arizona, appreciates his colleagues and credits them with his comfort level in his first year of teaching. While working on a master's degree in education at Northern Arizona University, he did his practicum at Red Rock in the fall of 2004, working at the school under the tutelage of a carefully selected veteran teacher. Phil observed for a while and eventually began teaching lessons. He did so well that when a teacher needed to take a leave of absence in the spring, the principal asked Phil if he would fill in as a long-term substitute teacher. Phil agreed and was able to combine that position with his student teaching. Being responsible for everything from day one was a "baptism by fire" to Phil, and he explains that he could not have done it without the mutual cooperation and support of his colleagues.

A rich background of experience contributed to Phil's ability to teach well under unique circumstances. Before attending college, Phil had served in the U.S. Army for eight years, where he learned Russian and spent two tours of duty in Germany. When he left the service, he attended the University of Arizona under the G.I. Bill, receiving a B.A. in anthropology. In traveling across five continents exploring the world, Phil developed a sense of curiosity about the world that informs his teaching and that he hopes to instill in his students.

When he returned to the United States, Phil decided to seek a master's degree in education. It was not an easy decision because it meant two more years of school and absorbing student loans. But he decided to "go for it" and describes the step as "a leap of faith." When asked why he wanted to teach, Phil simply says, "My parents and other people have asked me that, too. I don't know what to tell them. It just feels right. Teaching is not so much what I do as it is who I am. I've known for several years that I wanted to teach."

Now with only half a year of teaching under his belt, Phil is fully aware of how busy even a new teacher can be. In addition to his classes, he continues with his studies at Northern Arizona University, working part-time on an M.A.

in history. He has also stepped in as the freshman boy's basketball coach and was selected to be the junior class sponsor. The latter means overseeing the junior prom. "It's like planning a wedding!" he exclaims. And as the "father of the bride," his biggest challenge is fundraising and managing the money for the event.

Phil's main advice for new teachers is to become as familiar as possible with instructional methodologies and assessment practices that address the needs of ELLs (English language learners). "I have no greater challenge in the classroom than effectively addressing the needs of these students. The trick is to teach both content and language while keeping them engaged in all classroom activities."

Phil encourages new teachers to respect students. "If you respect your students, they will respect you. All that a good teacher does is based on that premise."

His final advice for new teachers is to see themselves as teachers of reading and writing, regardless of content area, a message drilled into him by his master's professors. A current goal for Phil is to find ways to

teach writing more effectively. He wants students in his literature class to read for content, but he also wants them to look at the writing itself and consider it from the author's perspective in order to improve their own.

As Phil prepared for his first full year of teaching, he drew on concepts he learned in several books from his master's program, including *The First Days of School: How to Be an Effective Teacher* by Harry K. Wong and Rosemary T. Wong, *After The End* by Barry Lane, and *Preparing to Teach Writing* by James Williams. He also looks forward to again participating in the school's Critical Friends Group, a monthly gathering of six to twelve teachers who discuss their teaching problems and efforts to improve student learning. The spirit of collaboration and support that emanates from this group and the rest of the faculty at Red Rock High School have been critical to Phil's early success in the classroom.



*"If you respect your students, they will respect you."*

*Phil Kuras*

own emerging philosophy of education. In either case, don't feel that you need to identify a single educational philosophy around which you will build your teaching career. In reality, few teachers follow only one educational philosophy, and as Figure 4.1 shows, educational philosophy is only one determinant of the professional goals a teacher sets. These goals are influenced by factors such as political dynamics, social forces, the expectations of one's immediate family or community, and economic conditions. For example, the Teachers' Voices: Walk in My Shoes for this chapter profiles Phil Kuras and explains how his life experiences, including extensive world travel, influenced his approach to teaching.

Most teachers develop an *eclectic* philosophy of education, which means they develop their own unique blending of two or more philosophies. To help you identify the philosophies most consistent with your beliefs and values about educational goals, curriculum, and teachers' and students' roles in learning, complete the following philosophic inventory in Figure 4.5. The self-knowledge you glean from completing the inventory and the philosophical constructs presented in this chapter provide a useful framework for studying the historical development of U.S. schools presented in the next chapter. For example, you will be able to see how philosophical orientations to education waxed and waned during each period—whether it was the perennialism and essentialism that characterized colonial schools, the progressivism of the 1920s and 1930s, the essentialism of the 1950s and 1980s, the humanism and social reconstructionism of the 1960s, or the constructivism of the 1990s and the first decade of the new century.

The following inventory is to help identify your educational philosophy. Respond to the statements on the scale from 5, "Strongly Agree," to 1, "Strongly Disagree," by circling the number that most closely fits your perspective.

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree	
1. The curriculum should emphasize essential knowledge, <i>not</i> students' personal interests.	5	4	3	2	1	
2. All learning results from rewards controlled by the external environment.	5	4	3	2	1	
3. Teachers should emphasize interdisciplinary subject matter that encourages project-oriented, democratic classrooms.	5	4	3	2	1	
4. Education should emphasize the search for personal meaning, <i>not</i> a fixed body of knowledge.	5	4	3	2	1	
5. The ultimate aim of education is constant, absolute, and universal: to develop the rational person and cultivate the intellect.	5	4	3	2	1	
6. Schools should actively involve students in social change to reform society.	5	4	3	2	1	
7. Schools should teach basic skills, <i>not</i> humanistic ideals.	5	4	3	2	1	

(continues)

FIGURE 4.5 Philosophic inventory

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree	
8. Eventually, human behavior will be explained by scientific laws, proving there is no free will.	5	4	3	2	1	
9. Teachers should be facilitators and resources who guide student inquiry; they should <i>not</i> be managers of behavior.	5	4	3	2	1	
10. The best teachers encourage personal responses and develop self-awareness in their students.	5	4	3	2	1	
11. The curriculum should be the same for everyone: the collective wisdom of Western culture delivered through lecture and discussion.	5	4	3	2	1	
12. Schools should lead society toward radical social change, <i>not</i> transmit traditional values.	5	4	3	2	1	
13. The purpose of schools is to ensure practical preparation for life and work, <i>not</i> to encourage personal development.	5	4	3	2	1	
14. Good teaching establishes an environment to control student behavior and to measure learning of prescribed objectives.	5	4	3	2	1	
15. Curriculum should emerge from students' needs and interests: therefore, it <i>should not</i> be prescribed in advance.	5	4	3	2	1	
16. Helping students develop personal values is more important than transmitting traditional values.	5	4	3	2	1	
17. The best education consists primarily of exposure to great works in the humanities.	5	4	3	2	1	
18. It is more important for teachers to involve students in activities to criticize and transform society than to teach the Great Books.	5	4	3	2	1	
19. Schools should emphasize discipline, hard work, and respect for authority, <i>not</i> encourage free choice.	5	4	3	2	1	

FIGURE 4.5 Philosophic inventory (continued)

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
20. Human learning can be controlled: Anyone can be taught to be a scientist or a thief; therefore, personal choice is a myth.	5	4	3	2	1
21. Education should enhance personal growth through problem solving in the present, <i>not</i> emphasize preparation for a distant future.	5	4	3	2	1
22. Because we are born with an unformed personality, personal growth should be the focus of education.	5	4	3	2	1
23. Human nature is constant—its most distinctive quality is the ability to reason. Therefore, the intellect should be the focus of education.	5	4	3	2	1
24. Schools perpetuate racism and sexism camouflaged as traditional values.	5	4	3	2	1
25. Teachers should efficiently transmit a common core of knowledge, <i>not</i> experiment with curriculum.	5	4	3	2	1
26. Teaching is primarily management of student behavior to achieve the teacher's objectives.	5	4	3	2	1
27. Education should involve students in democratic activities and reflective thinking.	5	4	3	2	1
28. Students should have significant involvement in choosing what and how they learn.	5	4	3	2	1
29. Teachers should promote the permanency of the classics.	5	4	3	2	1
30. Learning should lead students to involvement in social reform.	5	4	3	2	1
31. On the whole, school should and must indoctrinate students with traditional values.	5	4	3	2	1
32. If ideas cannot be proved by science, they should be ignored as superstition and nonsense.	5	4	3	2	1
33. The major goal for teachers is to create an environment where students can learn on their own by guided reflection on their experiences.	5	4	3	2	1

(continues)

FIGURE 4.3 (continued)

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
34. Teachers should create opportunities for students to make personal choices, <i>not</i> shape their behavior.	5	4	3	2	1
35. The aim of education should be the same in every age and society, <i>not</i> differ from teacher to teacher.	5	4	3	2	1
36. Education should lead society toward social betterment, <i>not</i> confine itself to essential skills.	5	4	3	2	1

## PHILOSOPHIC INVENTORY SCORE SHEET

(Complete this inventory for the "Philosophical Foundations of U.S. Education" reading and lecture)

In the space available, record the number you circled for each statement (1-36) from the inventory. Total the number horizontally and record it in the space on the far right of the score sheet. The highest total indicates your educational philosophy. **Keep in mind that your beliefs may align with more than one philosophy.**

### PERENNIALISM

$$\frac{\quad}{5} + \frac{\quad}{11} + \frac{\quad}{17} + \frac{\quad}{23} + \frac{\quad}{29} + \frac{\quad}{35} = \frac{\quad}{\text{Total}}$$

### ESSENTIALISM

$$\frac{\quad}{1} + \frac{\quad}{7} + \frac{\quad}{13} + \frac{\quad}{19} + \frac{\quad}{25} + \frac{\quad}{31} = \frac{\quad}{\text{Total}}$$

### BEHAVIORISM

$$\frac{\quad}{2} + \frac{\quad}{8} + \frac{\quad}{14} + \frac{\quad}{20} + \frac{\quad}{26} + \frac{\quad}{32} = \frac{\quad}{\text{Total}}$$

### PROGRESSIVISM

$$\frac{\quad}{3} + \frac{\quad}{9} + \frac{\quad}{15} + \frac{\quad}{21} + \frac{\quad}{27} + \frac{\quad}{33} = \frac{\quad}{\text{Total}}$$

### EXISTENTIALISM

$$\frac{\quad}{4} + \frac{\quad}{10} + \frac{\quad}{16} + \frac{\quad}{22} + \frac{\quad}{28} + \frac{\quad}{34} = \frac{\quad}{\text{Total}}$$

### SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTIVISM

$$\frac{\quad}{6} + \frac{\quad}{12} + \frac{\quad}{18} + \frac{\quad}{24} + \frac{\quad}{30} + \frac{\quad}{36} = \frac{\quad}{\text{Total}}$$