PART II

# Foundations of Teaching

## Chapter 4

# Philosophical Foundations of U.S. Education

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## Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

4.1 Explain why philosophy is important to teachers.

4.2 Explain six branches of philosophy that are important to teachers.

4.3 Describe five modern philosophical orientations to teaching.

**4.4** Explain three schools of psychological thought that can influence a teacher's philosophy.

**4.5** Explain how you will develop an eclectic educational philosophy to guide your own teaching.

## Poll Your Peers 4.1

When Philosophies Collide

# Dear Mentor

I am in my final quarter of my freshman year at Otterbein University. I plan to major in early childhood education (ECE). I'll graduate in three years and begin my search for a teaching position in Columbus, **OHIO**, or the surrounding area.

I have chosen the ECE program because I am comfortable in an early childhood environment. Such an environment is constantly changing, so being prepared and organized is key. When comparing careers that best fit my personality, I decided that this area of concentration suits me because of my ability to develop relationships with children; my organizational skills; and my caring nature as a peer, mentor, and teacher.

During this final freshman quarter at Otterbein, I student taught at various schools in Westerville, Ohio. During that time, I acquired knowledge about the constantly changing classroom and the individuality of each student.

Today, in these changing times, students are faced with many challenges. As a teacher, I must have a knowledgeable perspective on ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity among students. What guidance do you have for preparing to meet these challenges in today's diverse classrooms?

SINCERELY, ALISON THOMPSON

# Dear Alison

Start with your own self-exploration. Be cognizant that diversity has many faces, and it does not just include ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic levels. You must understand your own values, style of speaking and interacting, and response to the various forms of diversity. It is imperative that you are able to articulate your mores and traditions, as your values may be in conflict with some children's family cultures. Developing sensitivity to differences will help you to provide a richer social and learning environment for your students.

Furthermore, start researching the cultures and other forms of diversity presently represented in your area. Seek out people, experiences, and other resources that will help you understand the customs and way of life of other populations. Attend some community functions, ask questions, and be alert to classroom implications. Have discussions with classroom teachers as to the impact diversity has had on their teaching.

When you begin teaching, remember to always be respectful of the various types of families that are represented in your community. Also, be constantly aware that those parents may have different values and beliefs surrounding education that could be markedly different than your own. Include *all* families in the education-related decisions about their children. And lastly, it is important to always rely on school and district professional guidelines, standards, and ethics to inform decision making concerning your students.

EDUCATIONALLY YOURS, LYNN HINES
**NBCT (National Board Certified Teacher) 1995, 2005**
**Western Kentucky University,**
**NBPTS (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards)**
**Program Faculty, NBPTS**

## READERS' VOICES

*Why is philosophy important to teachers?*

Philosophy is important to teachers because it helps them understand how their beliefs and values influence the curriculum they present to students. Educational philosophy helps teachers focus on the true purpose of education—providing students with knowledge that is worthwhile and useful to them.

—ÁNGELITA,
*Teacher Education program, first year*

If you think about your own teachers in elementary through high school, you no doubt recall that each of them had a different approach to teaching. Each had a different set of responses to the vital questions that all teachers must answer: 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, 2012).

An example of a teacher who has thought carefully and clearly about how her teaching relates to "the larger context of individual and social development" is Ashley McCall, a third-grade bilingual teacher at Cesar E. Chavez Multicultural Academic Center in Chicago. The enrollment at Chavez is 95.5 percent Latino and 99.2 percent low-income.

> My commitment to teaching is explicitly a commitment to social justice, racial justice, and teaching truth to power. I teach where I teach because students of color deserve to be validated and celebrated. I've taught in three different neighborhoods, each with their own demographics, economic challenges, and cultural distinctiveness. Each neighborhood is also home to creative young minds eager to make their mark on the world. Every day in the classroom is an opportunity for acknowledgement, affirmation, and evolution. (McCall, 2017)

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 to guide professional action. (Some teachers disagree and believe philosophical reflections have nothing to contribute to the actual act of teaching; this stance, of course, is itself a philosophy of education.) For example, when deciding how to present new information to students, a teacher with a well-thought-out philosophy of education might realize "that a particular approach to teaching is better to adopt than its alternative because it treats subject matter intellectually rather than as solely a store of facts, which means regarding students as human beings capable of thought rather than merely of absorption" (Hansen, 2007, p. 7). Without the benefit of an educational philosophy, the teacher might have focused exclusively on students merely "absorbing" the new information. Similarly, educational philosophy can help teachers make appropriate decisions in the middle of a lesson—for example, deciding to "ask a thoughtful question about the novel at hand when students are restless rather than automatically piling on more information about it" (Hansen, 2007, p. 7).

Philosophy is also important to schools. 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*."

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. The following is an excerpt from the philosophy that guides a high school I recently visited in the Midwest:

> The purpose of our school is to educate, empower, and enable all students to become caring, contributing citizens who can succeed in an always-changing, complex world. Our school conveys high expectations for all students, and we are committed to helping *all students* be successful at meeting those expectations. Students will experience challenging learning opportunities within a supportive, caring community based on respect and responsibility. The ultimate goal of our curriculum is for students to acquire the *knowledge, skills,* and *attitudes* to become lifelong learners who have a positive, productive influence on our world.)

## The Nature of Philosophy

**Philosophy** is concerned with identifying the basic truths about being, knowledge, and conduct. Whereas 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.

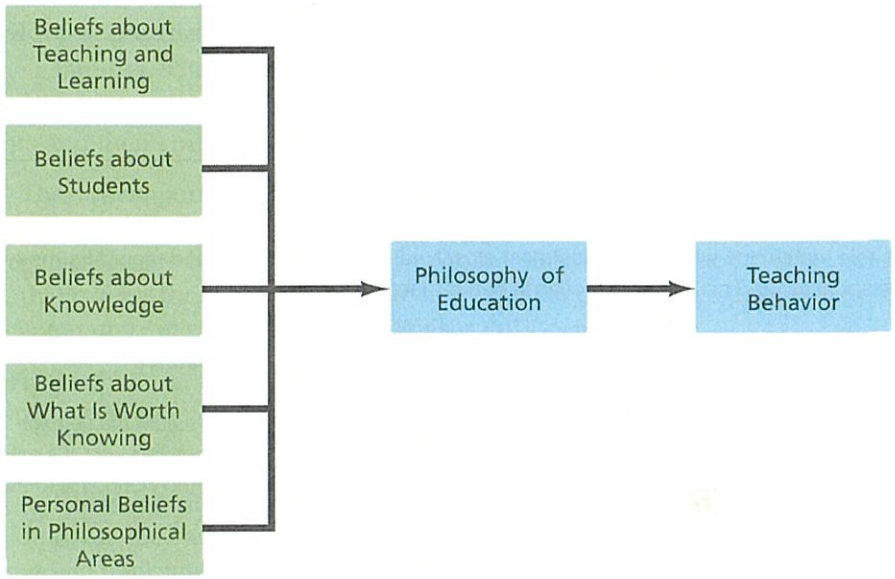
The word *philosophy* may be literally translated from the original Greek as "love of wisdom." In particular, a philosophy is a set of ideas formulated to comprehend the world. Among the giants of Western philosophy have been Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, René Descartes, John Locke, 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?

## 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 a 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. Taken together, your beliefs about different dimensions of teaching are the foundation of your educational philosophy and will determine *how* you interact with students.

**Figure 4.1** Educational beliefs and teaching behavior




The worth of knowledge in a subject area is reflected in the educational philosophy of Paul Gray, who teaches social studies and AP (Advanced Placement) Human Geography at Russellville High School in Russellville, **ARKANSAS.** His philosophy emphasizes the critical importance of learning geography in today's world:

> There is no more important course a student can take in a post-9/11 world than geography. Students today have to live in an ever-changing global environment. Students must be able to understand and deal with other cultures, religions, and worldviews. Geography is the only discipline that can teach students how to connect politics to religion, urban issues to cultural issues, history to politics, and so on. (Gray, 2008)

## Beliefs About Teaching and Learning

One of the most important components of your educational philosophy is your set of beliefs 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, whereas the second view emphasizes students' *construction* of knowledge.

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. Noted Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921–1997) compared the transmission view to a form of "banking" in which teacher and students do not engage in authentic, two-way communication:

> Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. (Freire, 2000, p. 72)

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.

**Figure 4.2** Where do you stand?

For each pair of statements about the teacher's role, determine which response 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 |

**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.

## 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.

As a teacher, it is important that your beliefs about students are not based on "deficit thinking." **Deficit thinking** can lead a teacher to have lower expectations for students from cultural backgrounds that differ from the more affluent dominant culture. If such students are not successful in school, it is because they lack readiness to learn and their parents are not interested in education. Teachers may even view these students as less intelligent, less capable, and unmotivated.

Teachers who use deficit thinking do not value the **cultural capital** students possess—the knowledge, behaviors, and skills that enable them to be successful in their own cultures. Nor do these teachers understand that their students' families have **funds of knowledge**—"the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2001, p. 133).

For a teacher, the antidote to deficit thinking is a desire to learn about students and their families. The following comments by a White female teacher at a predominantly African American urban K–5 public school illustrate the value of learning about students and their cultures:

> The most important way to reach children is to develop an interpersonal connection with them. I'm pretty well knit into the community here. I go to volleyball games. I go to basketball games. I go to my kids' soccer games. I go to parties that parents throw. I think it's really important to try to immerse yourself in the community in which you work. (Walker, 2011, p. 587)

Similarly, I explain in the following, how knowledge of my students when I taught at DuSable High School on Chicago's South Side enriched my English classes:

> My primary goal while teaching came to be the creation of a group climate in which listening, sharing, and thinking would occur. I would listen to my students; they would listen to me and to each other; and, as much as possible, we would think together on commonly perceived tasks or problems. I measured the success of my classes by whether or not a meaningful student-teacher dialogue had occurred. Often this dialogue amounted to a cultural tradeoff—my students had a lot that they were able to teach me, and I, of course, had a lot that I was able to teach them. (Parkay, 1983, p. 122)

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.

# FOCUS ON **DIVERSITY**: ACCEPTING ALL STUDENTS

As a teacher, you should guard against negative attitudes toward individual students or groups of students. Although you cannot eliminate the prejudice, inter-group hostility, and racism that are found in society at large, you will have an obligation to see

that your actions in the classroom do not convey negative attitudes about students on the basis of factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, family lifestyle, manner of dress, language, or socioeconomic status. A teacher who models positive attitudes toward all students is Cathleen Cadigan, who teaches at Thomas Jefferson High School in Dallas, **TEXAS**. Although her school has surveillance cameras in the hallways, a police officer assigned to the school, and a metal detector at the main entrance, Cadigan reports that "There is not a thug in this building. We have some who *think* they are. [There is no one] who wouldn't say, 'Miss Cadigan, can I carry that box for you? Can I hold the door for you?' They are just as sweet as sweet can be . . . they are probably the most polite kids I have ever met" (College Board and Phi Delta Kappa, 2009, p. 7).

## Application Exercise 4.1

The Importance of a Personal Philosophy of Education

## 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 50 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. In addition, as Steven Crawford, a Spanish teacher at a Bellevue, **WASHINGTON**, high school points out, self-understanding is essential for teachers: "[Good teaching] is just having a center of yourself and an understanding of who you are in front of the kids and who they need you to be" (College Board and Phi Delta Kappa, 2009, p. 25). 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 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. Through conversations with their peers in another country, U.S. students have an opportunity to reflect on how their own values, beliefs, and attitudes are different from or similar to those of students in the other country.

## 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 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?

## Check Your Understanding 4.1

# TECHNOLOGY in ACTION

## Web Conferencing Leads to Better Understanding of Another Culture and Oneself

Louise Zhao has taught Advanced Chinese at Lincoln High School for the past five years. Her approach is part presentation of grammar and vocabulary—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, these presentations don't give her students what she is 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 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 contacted Mr. Lee, who teaches English to students at a high school in Shanghai. The two teachers agreed that they would have their students meet once each week, for 1 hour, via Blackboard Collaborate. Blackboard Collaborate 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 1-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 they stayed on task, and create a setting conducive for one-on-one conversation.

Luckily for Mrs. Zhao, the school's computer lab was up to date, 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.

(continued)

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 video conference, 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.

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

**VISIT:**

There are many options to choose from if you would like your students to participate in a web video conference. A few websites offer thorough reviews of free or inexpensive software options for web conferencing, such as ClickMeeting, Zoho Meeting, eVoice, Amazon Chime, Google+ Hangouts, Skype, iChat (for Macintosh), Zoom, Windows Live Messenger, Cisco WebEx, and GoToMeeting. Reviews cover topics such as real-time web conferencing, desktop video conferencing, screen sharing, online meetings, web seminars, and host sites.

You can try many of these options 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 email address of the person you want to conference with, and you are connected.

# 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, 1960, 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. This chapter's Teachers' Voices: Being an Agent of Change feature profiles a teacher who encourages her students to grapple with metaphysical questions.

# TEACHERS VOICES BEING AN AGENT OF CHANGE

KAREN TOAVS

## Every Day Is Filled With Deep Thinking And Contemplation

I teach because I want to help students figure out what they are going to do in the world. I want students to realize that they have the power and the imagination to help change where we're going to go.

The students I see every day in my classroom are very different from students of the past. Their world is full of technology and full of insights, and they need to have direction with where they want to go with that.

When I have students in my room, one of the most important things we do is engage in conversation. So I share with them what I know about human knowledge and where we've been. Part of my challenge to them is: Where do you want to take this? Where is our future going to go? Because it's that future that's so important.

For me, teaching is a gift because every day is filled with laughter and filled with deep thinking and contemplation—sometimes arguments, sometimes debates—but that's all part of the magic of helping kids understand the world and helping kids develop their own opinions about where we should go in the future.

In my classroom, part of helping students record that is a technique called visual mapping. When students walk in my classroom every day, they create one page per day as a visual map, a graphic organizer. We use all sorts of colors, images, texts, key words, and deep reflections. Students record the entire time that we are talking or learning everything that goes on in the classroom that hour.

As a result of that, we have a database, a place to start the next day. Every day we move forward, and our discussions get deeper and deeper, and the kids realize great things about the world. I love watching them grow in that depth.

As a Teacher of the Year, one of the things that I've enjoyed the most is the deep discussions that we have as colleagues about where we come from in education, what we hope for our students; and, universally, it's all the same . . . we teach because we want students to believe that they *can* change the world. We teach inspiration, and, unfortunately, that's not something that's easily tested; that's not something that's easily measured.

Yes, I believe what students learn in my classroom for content and the things that they do on their visual maps are so important to help them understand the world, but it's not nearly as important as what they do when they walk out of my classroom. I want students to know that they have the power to go out there and do all the great things that they want to accomplish. I teach because I want to help students change the world.

### PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. Toavs uses "visual mapping" to stimulate her students' "deep thinking and contemplation." With reference to the subject area and grade level for which you are preparing to teach, how might you use visual mapping with your students? What are some examples of possible "deep thinking" by your students?
2. Based on Toavs's comments, what do you think are her beliefs about teaching and learning? Beliefs about students? Beliefs about knowledge? Beliefs about what is worth knowing?
3. Toavs says that teachers "teach inspiration." Reflecting on your own teachers, have any of them "taught" you inspiration? How did they do that? How might you "teach" inspiration to your future students?

Karen Toavs was the 2011 **NORTH DAKOTA** State Teacher of the Year. This feature is adapted from her Council of Chief State School Officers Teacher of the Year video retrieved February 2, 2014, from http://www.pearsonfoundation.org/ccsso-toy/2011/nd/autoplay

## 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 what 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? And most importantly, perhaps, "*Whose* social values or morality should form the basis of instruction in public schools?" (italics added) (Spring, 2018, p. 4).

**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

Whereas 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 for those situations 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).

## 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 contributions that the arts can make to *all* areas of the curriculum. For example, "Participating in plays, songs, and dances fills children with joy, and this joy carries over into the rest of their education" (Nussbaum, 2009, p. 58). Clearly, educational philosopher Harry Broudy (1979) was correct when he made his often-quoted statement that "The arts are necessary, not 'just nice'" (pp. 347–350).

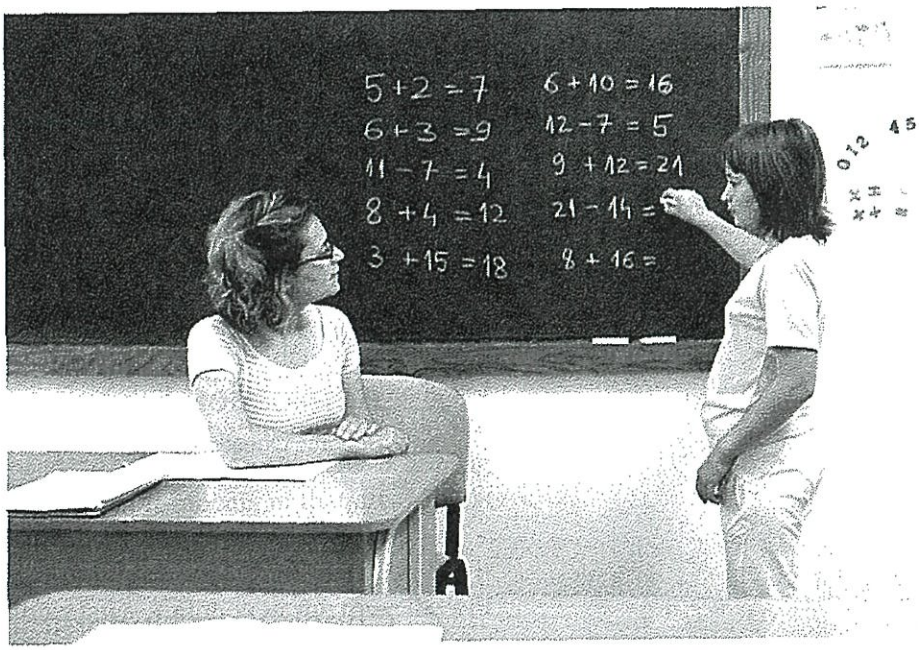
Aesthetics can also help the teacher increase his or her effectiveness. Because it may be viewed as a form of artistic expression, teaching can be judged according to artistic standards of beauty and quality. In this regard, the teacher is an artist whose medium of expression is the spontaneous, unrehearsed,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




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

An example of a teacher who understands the importance of Socratic questioning is Alyssa Hucaro, a sixth-grade special education teacher at Wooddale Middle School in Memphis, **TENNESEE**. Her plans for the new school year include strategies for students to become independent thinkers:

> As the turn of a new school year approaches . . . I ask myself, will I teach my students to think for themselves? Are my students able to express themselves freely in the classroom, so that they can advocate for themselves better and become self-sufficient members of the community? To make my classroom more meaningful, I'll need to incorporate strategies that increase the opportunities for my students to think on their own and formulate new ideas. (Nucaro, August 15, 2017)

The legacy of Socrates lives on in all teachers who use Socratic questioning to encourage students to think for themselves. Figure 4.3 presents "Eight Guidelines for Facilitating a Socratic Discussion."

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**Figure 4.3** Eight guidelines for facilitating a Socratic discussion

The following guidelines can be used to facilitate a Socratic discussion with students. After some experience with the approach, students could even take turns leading a Socratic discussion in small groups of 5–6 students. In addition to a student who acts as discussion leader, one student should be an observer and provide feedback to the group about how well it followed the guidelines. After each guideline, suggested comments for the discussion leader are presented in italics. Each student should have a copy of the guidelines to use during the discussion.

1. At the beginning of the discussion, did the discussion leader clarify the goal(s) of the discussion?
   *(The goal(s) of this discussion is(are) . . . )*
2. Each time a student answered a question, did the discussion leader respond with another question?
   *(Based on your comment, I'd like you to respond to the following question . . . )*
3. As the discussion proceeded, did the discussion leader ask for additional relevant information, evidence, or data?
   *(On what information, evidence, or data is your comment based?)*
4. As appropriate, did the discussion leader question the conclusions, interpretations, and/or inferences made by participants in the discussion?
   *(What evidence led you to draw that conclusion? Can you explain your thinking? Might there be another possible explanation?)*
5. Did the discussion leader keep the discussion focused on topics related to the goal(s) of the discussion?
   *(Can you explain how your comment is related to the goal(s) of our discussion?)*
6. Did the discussion leader ask participants to explain unwarranted assumptions?
   *(What leads you to make that assumption?)*
7. As appropriate, did the discussion leader ask for the implications and/or consequences of statements made by participants?
   *(What are the implications of your statement? What might be the consequences if people did as you are suggesting?)*
8. Did the discussion leader ask participants to consider the point(s) of view reflected in comments?
   *(What would someone who has a different point of view think about your comment? What would you say to that person?)*

Based on 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.

## Application Exercise 4.2

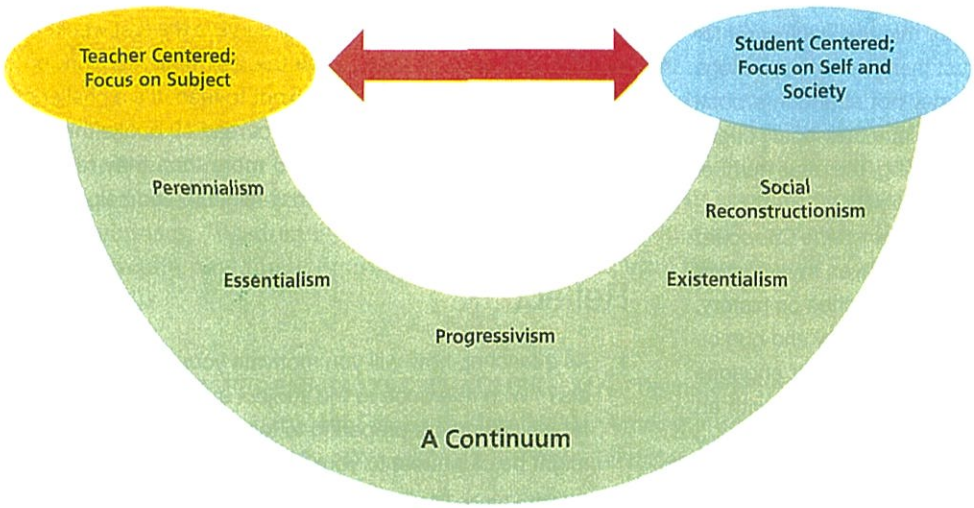
Socratic Questioning

## Check Your Understanding 4.2

# What Are Five Modern Philosophical Orientations To Teaching?

Five major philosophical orientations to teaching address the branches of philosophy examined in the previous sections. These orientations can guide teachers as they grapple with questions about metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, ethics, aesthetics, and logic. The five orientations, or schools of thought, are perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, existentialism, and social reconstructionism. The following sections present a brief description of each orientation, 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, to a considerable extent, illustrates that philosophical orientation in action. Remember, though, that most teachers develop an approach to teaching that reflects an *eclectic blend* of two or more orientations to teaching.

**Figure 4.4** Five philosophical orientations to teaching




## 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, and "The function of the school is to educate the intellect" (Leahy, 2009, p. 44). 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; the cultivation of the intellect 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. The Teaching on Your Feet feature for this chapter profiles a teacher who understands that a perennialist

curriculum requires that students become readers—"I let them know that the most important thing they can do for me is read."

## ıg on Your Feet:

### Reluctant Readers

I have over 400 book titles in my classroom library. There is a wide range of genres and reading levels. I've read nearly all of them. Within our literacy block I make sure there is time for my students to read their self-selected books. We confer and I note their progress. I've implemented ideas based on books I've read and workshop sessions I've attended. There is a 40-book goal each year for the students. Student as well as teacher book chats take place frequently. Students have a "someday list" in their reading and writing logs, and add books to this list during book chats if the book interests them. I let them know that the most important thing they can do for me is read. They are to read at least 20 minutes each night for homework, and I let them know I trust them to do this; no logs are used. As a class rule, students may not abandon a book until they have read at least 50 pages minus their age. I check in with them and note what they are reading, the page number and their insights. This all builds accountability.

Sometimes a read aloud can help. *Indian in the Cupboard* by Lynn Reid Banks is a favorite, and I find even my reluctant readers want me to read more. This book touches on history, fantasy, and realistic fiction with beautiful imagery and humor. *Flying Solo* by Ralph Fletcher is another book that engages even my most reluctant readers. Once they connect with an author or genre, having them read on their own is a risk they are willing to step into.

As a teacher, students need to know you are a reader, too. They need to understand that you will support them, that you have high expectations, and that you won't give up on them. I find books that relate to their interests and suggest them to students. Providing this scaffolding can move them from reluctant to more engaged.

I have a student this year who has already made great progress. He now asks me for book recommendations and is reading. He may have only read three books so far eight weeks into the year, but that's two more than he did over the same period last year. I consider that success. Giving up on reluctant readers is not an option.

**"DANDRE"**

### Analyze

Not all students come through the door with a love of reading. Some have done their best to avoid reading on their own. I have parents tell me early on that their child doesn't like to read. Since students fill out interest surveys the first week, and I confer with each of them, I use this as I begin to work on a way to find a book that they will want to read. It's a challenge. It takes time. These students may not read 40 books this year, but my goal is to have them read more than they read last year. I hope to find a book that they relate to and help to build a purpose for reading.

### Reflect

1. As a teacher, how will you motivate your "reluctant readers?" With reference to the subject area and grade level for which you are preparing to teach, what book titles might be of interest to your students?
2. Dandre says, "As a teacher, you need to let your students know you are a reader, too." Why is this important? What books have you read during the last year that you would like to tell your students about?

*Note:* From October 19, 2013, blog post by "dandre" at the Pearson Education, Inc. Teachability website. Retrieved February 3, 2014, from http://www.teachability.com/thread/3159. 

**PERENNIALIST EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHERS** Two of the best-known advocates of the perennialist philosophy are Robert Maynard Hutchins (1899–1977) and Mortimer Adler (1902–2001). As president of the University of Chicago, Hutchins developed an undergraduate curriculum based on the study of the Great Books and discussions of these classics in small seminars (Hutchins & Adler, 1963). 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.
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. The value of careful study of the Great Books is evident in Tamara Mann's description of teaching Socrates' *The Apology* to low-income, mostly minority high school students during a summer program at Columbia University:

> "I'll tell you," Quanisha offered, "but don't laugh. I wonder what this guy Socrates is saying. I just don't understand him. I have been up all night. I read this three times and I don't know what he is saying and I wonder about it."
>
> So our seminar really began, with that familiar little phrase, "Let's turn to the text."
>
> It was Socrates' description of wisdom that caused the most collective confusion. "I don't get it," Lanique piped, "he is wise and not wise, but wiser than other people and still ignorant. That doesn't seem very wise to me."
>
> I smiled knowing that my students cared and were close to understanding something of great value. "Let's look closely at what he says when he is off investigating those who might have a claim to wisdom," I said.
>
> The class found its rhythm and my students, drawing deeply from their reading of the *Apology*, debated the contours of wisdom, knowledge, and learning for the greater part of an hour. The morning ended with our own working definition of wisdom that we would try to apply to our future seminars, "Wisdom is being upfront about what you don't know and then carefully, ploddingly, figuring out how you would learn more about it." (Mann, 2015)

**PORTRAIT OF A PERENNIALIST TEACHER** Mrs. Bernstein has been teaching English at the high school level since the late 1990s. 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. Turn off your cell phone, no texting, no multitasking—you pay attention to what she says."

From time to time, she encounters students who insist on being taught subjects that they call "relevant." A graduate of a top-notch university in the East, where she received a classical, liberal education, Mrs. Bernstein refuses to lessen the emphasis in her classes on great works of literature that she believes students need to know—*Beowulf* and the works of Chaucer, Dickens, and Shakespeare, for example.

As far as her approach to classroom management is concerned, another 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

Kablonk/Golden Pixels LLC/Alamy Stock Photo

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

misbehave, and she appears to be immune to the grumbling 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 unequaled 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.

## 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 was later advanced by E.D. Hirsch's book, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (1987). In the book, Hirsch maintains that U.S. students lack basic knowledge needed to function in today's world. They lack "cultural literacy"—background information that great writers and speakers assume their audience possesses. The book includes 5,000 facts that Hirsch believes every American should know. Hirsch also launched the Core Knowledge Foundation that provides curriculum materials to more than 1,200 Core Knowledge schools around the nation.

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.

An example of the essentialist approach to teaching is a three-week lesson on ancient Rome that Bridgit McCarthy taught her third-grade students at New Dimensions, a public charter school in Morganton, **NORTH CAROLINA**, that teaches the Core Knowledge curriculum. Her reflections on the unit illustrate the importance of students' background knowledge:

> While I always have high expectations in my classroom, I was a bit nervous when we started the ancient Rome unit. The objectives are complex, the vocabulary is challenging. The content itself includes a great deal of geography and culture, plenty of politics, and an assumption that . . . kids already knew quite a bit about ancient Greece.
>
> [However], my third graders had no problems here. Building on their existing knowledge of other cultures' gods and goddesses made the new material easier to access. I also didn't have to "teach" polytheism because the very idea that people had separate deities for different aspects of their lives was old hat to them, having explored it in first grade with Mesopotamia and Egypt and again in second with ancient Greece. (McCarthy, 2015)

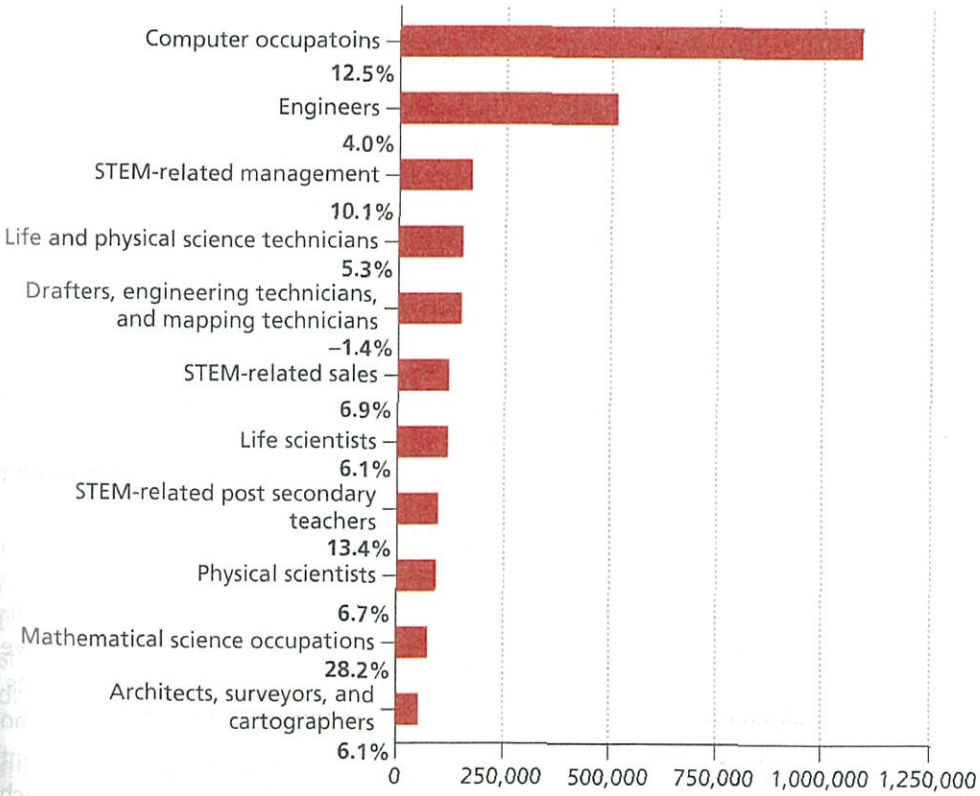
# FOCUS ON **STEM**: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

A current example of essentialist philosophy is the emphasis on STEM education in K–12 schools. **STEM education** refers to student learning in the broad areas of science, technology, engineering, and math. STEM should also include "Art + Design," according to the Rhode Island School of Design and proponents around the nation. They maintain that "Art + Design" should be at the center of STEM and that innovation requires artists and designers. Thus, STEM + Art = STEAM (STEM to STEAM, 2017).

Business leaders, policymakers, and others point out that our nation's future depends, increasingly, on STEM. Economic growth and development, national security, innovation, and global competitiveness require a workforce knowledgeable in STEM. However, few U.S. students pursue advanced study in STEM fields, and there is a shortage of teachers in those subjects.

Jobs of the future will be increasingly STEM based. Figure 4.5 shows the projected job openings and growth rates in percentages for types of STEM occupations from 2014 to 2024. The computer occupations group will have more than 1 million job openings, a growth rate of 12.5 percent. The STEM group projected to grow the fastest from 2014 to 2024 is the mathematical sciences group at 28.2 percent. This group includes occupations such as mathematicians and statisticians.

**Figure 4.5** Projected job openings and growth rates for types of STEM occupations, 2014 to 2024




Source: Adapted from United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *STEM Occupations: Past, Present, and future*, January 2017, pp. 10 and 12; and online figures at https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2017/science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-stem-occupations-past-present-and-future/home.htm

**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 mini-lectures 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.

In addition, progressive teachers understand that meaningful teaching and learning requires positive, caring relationships between teacher and students. Progressive teachers, therefore, make it a point to nurture close relationships with their students. They understand that students must feel valued in the classroom—accepted for who they are. Progressive teachers are guided by a maxim attributed to former President Theodore Roosevelt: "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care."

**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 considerable freedom to determine their school experiences. "They guide students in various projects and discoveries, relying in part, on the child's natural curiosity" (Leahy, 2009, p. 34). 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.

**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-30s, 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.

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 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.

**Video Example 4.1**

**Progressivism in Preschool:** A preschool teacher describes opportunities she gives her students to discover learning and share interests. She also conveys that her philosophy of education is not always strictly a reflection of one model. Often you need to pull in beliefs from the different philosophies to create one that is personally yours.

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 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. 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. 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*. "The purpose of life, for the existentialists, is to define oneself" (Leahy, 2009, p. 38).

The writings of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), a 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 (1972), "Existence precedes essence . . . . First of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself" (p. 98).

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, we must commit ourselves to assign meaning to our *own* lives. As Maxine Greene, who has been described as "the preeminent American philosopher of education today" (Ayers & Miller, 1998, p. 4), stated: "We have to know about our lives, clarify our situations if we are to understand the world from our shared standpoints" (Greene, 1995a, 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."

**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"—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), whereas 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 men" (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.

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. An example of a postmodern teacher who wants students to understand that history is based on "stories" told from particular points of view is David Knight, a teacher at Boston Arts Academy, a public school for the visual and performing arts. An excerpt from his blog post, "Teaching Courage in a Postmodern World," explains his approach to teaching students about the civil rights movement:

> "You do know that children and teenagers played a huge role in the civil rights movement?" I asked [my students].
>
> Come to find out, they did not. Students thought of history and social change in terms of iconic figures, heroes and heroines, instead of common folk. They didn't know about the leaders behind the scenes, such as Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Septima Poinsette Clark, Bayard Rustin, or the hundreds of child activists in the Children's Crusade in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963.
>
> The coming weeks in my class included more reading and discussion of young, unacknowledged change agents. I used Ellen Levine's *Freedom's Children* and Elizabeth Partridge's *Marching for Freedom*, both nonfiction books about

> young people's involvement in the civil rights movement. Students read the story of Claudette Colvin, the 15-year-old girl who refused to give up her seat in Montgomery, Alabama., nine months before Rosa Parks did the same thing.
>
> My goal was to explode conventional ideas about who makes history and why. I wanted my students to know that we all make history, even if our names don't make it into history books. And that these activists were people who made mistakes, had doubts, worried about skin color and their looks and had other experiences to which my students could relate . . . . [My students] all learned that studying history is difficult, complicated and dependent on the storyteller's point of view. (Knight, 2013)

**PORTRAIT OF AN EXISTENTIALIST TEACHER** After he started teaching English eight years ago at a suburban high school, Algernon Gates 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, Algernon 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, Algernon 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.

Algernon 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-30s, 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.

Algernon's approach to teaching is perhaps summed up by the bumper sticker on the 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, 1956, 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 highlights the need for various reforms and, whenever possible, allows students to have firsthand experiences in reform activities. Teachers realize that they and their students can play a significant role in helping to resolve the challenges that confront humanity. An example of a teacher with a social reconstructionist educational philosophy is Jim Trogdon, a middle school science teacher in Coventry, **OHIO.** His students work on project-based learning units that are part of the EarthEcho Water Challenge. The Challenge involves the public in protecting water resources around the world. Trogdon's students monitor water quality in local rivers and raise trout in their classroom to stock the rivers. Recently, they helped to "daylight" a stream—i.e., brought a trapped tributary back from underground. His students are part of a local team that includes civil engineers, tree planting experts, an ecologist, landscape designers, and hydrologists (EarthEcho International, 2017).

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, climate change, international terrorism, hunger, natural disasters, 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.

## Application Exercise 4.3

To Change the Social Order

**PORTRAIT OF A SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTIONIST TEACHER** At the urban high school where she teaches social studies and history, Martha Hernandez 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.

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.

## FOCUS ON **DIVERSITY**: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Much like social reconstructionism, **critical pedagogy** focuses on how education can promote **social justice**, especially for underrepresented groups that often 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).

An example of how critical pedagogy and social justice can provide a focus for teaching is evident in Mansur Buffins's explanation of why he decided to become a teacher.

> I would like to teach in a secondary school serving predominantly low-income, African American students. And I am entering the profession as an intentional form of activism. My goal is to actively break down inequities that negatively impact my students, in schools and in life . . . .
>
> My classroom will be a space of critical thinking that uses history lessons to instill within students a sense of agency to positively impact the world today. My students will engage in projects and assignments that prepare them for civic engagement and active resistance to social injustices and inequities, planting a seed for future activism . . . As a Black male teacher, I will be a role model, mentor, and father figure to my students. (Buffins, 2017)

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, 2000, 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, 2000, 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'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.

## FOCUS ON **DIVERSITY**: 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" (Scering, 1997, p. 62). To ensure the growth and well-being of *all* students in a society dominated by the beliefs and perspectives of White men, 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]" (Scering, 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.

Feminist pedagogy is particularly applicable to today's calls to increase the number of girls who enroll in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) classes. An example a teacher committed to this goal is Ashley Lauren Samsa, a high school English teacher in a South Chicago, **ILLINOIS** suburb:

> Teachers play a key role in helping girls realize that entering STEM careers is not only possible but necessary. At my school, elective STEM classes are often full of boys; teachers are lucky to have one or two girls sign up. And those girls tend to drop out or look for other electives, either because the class doesn't offer the academic and emotional support they need or because they just feel too isolated to continue. This phenomenon funnels girls who might be interested in STEM into other fields where women are more widely represented. (Samsa, 2015)

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 (1989), 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."

**COMPARING PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATIONS TO TEACHING** Figure 4.6 presents a matrix that compares the underlying belief systems of the five philosophical orientations to teaching. After reading the description of each teacher, try to think of additional words or phrases for each cell that would describe that teacher's beliefs.

**Figure 4.6** A matrix for comparing the underlying belief systems of five philosophical orientations to teaching

| | Philosophical Orientations to Teaching | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Educational Beliefs** | **Perennialist Teacher** | **Essentialist Teacher** | **Progressive Teacher** | **Existentialist Teacher** | **Social Reconstructionist Teacher** |
| Beliefs About Teaching and Learning | Teaching is transmission of knowledge and concepts through lecture, rigorous discussion, and analysis. Learning is acquisition of knowledge and concepts through rigorous study of organized disciplines of knowledge. | Teaching is effective, efficient transmission of knowledge and skills. Learning involves mastering knowledge and skills through repetition and practice. | Teachers are trusted guides and coaches who create educative experiences based on students' interests and concerns. Learning is natural and springs from students' genuine interests and concerns. | Teachers help students develop deeper understanding of their experiences and the meaning of their lives. Meaningful learning occurs when students have the courage to ask important questions about the meaning of their lives. | Teachers organize inquiry-oriented, problem-solving groups of students that learn how to improve society and the quality of people's lives. Meaningful learning involves accepting one's responsibility to become a contributing member of a group that is committed to improving society and the quality of people's lives. |
| Beliefs About Students | Students' primary role is to develop rigorous intellectual discipline to study organized bodies of knowledge. | Students' primary role is to memorize and master facts and information. | Students are internally motivated to learn how to solve personally meaningful problems. | Students' primary role is to become "wide awake" and begin to ask important questions about the meaning of their lives. | Students' primary role is to become involved in social change and develop a commitment to improving society and the quality of people's lives. |
| Beliefs About Knowledge | Knowledge consists of concepts and big ideas developed by outstanding, preeminent individuals throughout history. | Knowledge is units of subject matter, discrete facts. | Knowledge results from the experience of learning how to solve personally meaningful problems. | Knowledge is awareness that leads to greater and deeper understanding of one's unique experience and the meaning of life. | Knowledge emerges from active involvement in the change process required to improve society and the quality of people's lives. |
| Beliefs About What Is Worth Knowing | Eminent accomplishments by humankind and time-honored "great ideas" and concepts are most worth knowing. | Common core of essential knowledge and skills is most worth knowing. | How to solve personally meaningful problems and thus live a productive, satisfying life is most worth knowing. | The meaning of one's experience and purpose in life is most worth knowing. | Knowledge of the process of social change and how to improve society and the quality of people's lives is most worth knowing. |

Check Your Understanding 4.3

# 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 their teaching. 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. The following sections present a brief description of each orientation. Following each description is a sample portrait of a teacher whose behavior, to a considerable extent, illustrates that psychological orientation in action.

## 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 (1982) calls facilitators, and the classroom should be a place "in which curiosity and the natural desire to learn can be nourished and enhanced" (p. 31). Through their nonjudgmental understanding of students, humanist teachers encourage students to learn and grow.

**Video Example 4.2**

**Humanism in Action:** A teacher who is influenced by humanistic psychology focuses on nurturing personal responsibility and awareness in students. This video conversation among teachers focuses on how they build relationships with students and empower them to make positive choices.

**PORTRAIT OF A HUMANIST TEACHER** Ten years ago, Ramerra 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

Ramerra has developed with her students is reflected in the regularity with which former students return to visit or to seek her advice.

Ramerra 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 Ramerra's teaching is based on classroom discussions in which she encourages students to share openly their ideas and feelings about the subject at hand. Ramerra's interactions with students reveal her skill at creating a conversational environment that makes students feel safe and willing to contribute. During discussions, Ramerra 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 Ramerra 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 Ramerra.

## 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** Ramona 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, Ramona 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 video games on one of the two personal computers in the room.

Ramona 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, Ramona 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.

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

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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.

**PORTRAIT OF A CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHER** Lisa Sanchez teaches English at a middle school in a large city on the East Coast. 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."

**COMPARING PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS TO TEACHING** Figure 4.7 presents a matrix that compares the underlying belief systems of the three psychological orientations. After reading the description of each teacher, try to think of additional words or phrases for each cell that would describe that teacher's beliefs.

**Figure 4.8** Factors that shape an eclectic philosophy of education and teaching behaviors


**Figure 4.9** Philosophic inventory

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, *not* 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, *not* 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, *not* humanistic ideals. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 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, *not* 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, *not* transmit traditional values. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. The purpose of schools is to ensure practical preparation for life and work, *not* to encourage personal choice. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. The best teachers manage student behavior and accurately measure learning of prescribed objectives. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. Curriculum should emerge from students' needs and interests: therefore, it *should not* 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 |

| | Strongly Agree | | | | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. Schools should emphasize discipline, hard work, and respect for authority, *not* reform society. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 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, *not* 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. The universal constant in human nature is the ability to reason; therefore, the sole focus of education should be to develop reasoning ability. | 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 set fixed body of knowledge, *not* 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," *not* practical preparation for life. | 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 |
| 34. Teachers should create opportunities for students to make personal choices, *not* shape their behavior. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 35. The aim of education should be the same in every age and society, *not* differ from teacher to teacher. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 36. Education should lead society toward social betterment, *not* confine itself to essential skills. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**Philosophic Inventory Score Sheet**

Record the number you circled for each statement (1–36). 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.

**Essentialism**

Essentialism was a response to progressivism. It advocates a conservative philosophic perspective. The emphasis is on intellectual and moral standards that should be transmitted by the schools. The core of the curriculum should be essential knowledge and skills. Schooling should be practical and not influence social policy. It is a "back-to-basics" movement that emphasizes facts. Students should be taught discipline, hard work, and respect for authority. Influential essentialists: William C. Bagley, H. G. Rickover, Arthur Bestor, and William Bennett; E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* could fit this category.

_____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

1 7 13 19 25 31 Total

**Behaviorism**

Behaviorism denies free will and maintains that behavior is the result of external forces, which cause humans to behave in predictable ways. Behaviorism is linked with empiricism, which stresses scientific experiment and observation. Behaviorists are skeptical about metaphysical claims. Behaviorists look for laws governing human behavior the way natural scientists look for empirical laws governing natural events. The role of the teacher is to identify behavioral goals and establish a reward system to achieve goals. Influential behaviorists: B. F. Skinner, Ivan Pavlov, J. B. Watson, and Benjamin Bloom.

_____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

2 8 14 20 26 32 Total

**Progressivism**

Progressivism focuses more on the child than the subject matter. The students' interests and personal growth are important. Learners should be active and learn to solve problems by reflecting on their experiences. The school should help students develop democratic personal and social values. Because society is always changing, new ideas are important to make the future better than the past. Influential progressivists: John Dewey, William Kilpatrick, and Francis Parker.

_____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

3 9 15 21 27 33 Total

**Existentialism**

Existentialism is a highly subjective philosophy that stresses the importance of the individual and emotional commitment to living authentically. It emphasizes individual choice over the importance of rational theories, history, and social institutions. Jean-Paul Sartre, the French philosopher, claimed "Existence precedes essence." Sartre meant that people are born and must define themselves through personal choices. Influential existentialists: Jean-Paul Sartre, Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Albert Camus, Carl Rogers, A. S. Neill, and Maxine Greene.

_____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

4 10 16 22 28 34 Total

**Perennialism**

Perennialists advocate that the aim of education is to ensure that students acquire knowledge about the great ideas of Western culture. Human beings are rational, and it is this capacity that needs to be developed. Cultivation of the intellect is the highest priority of an education worth having. The highest level of knowledge in each field should be the focus of curriculum. Influential perennialists: Robert Maynard Hutchins, Mortimer Adler, and Allan Bloom.

_____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

5 11 17 23 29 35 Total

**Reconstructionism**

Reconstructionists advocate that schools should take the lead to reconstruct society. Schools have more than a responsibility to transmit knowledge; they have the mission to transform society as well. Reconstructionists go beyond progressivists in advocating social activism. Influential reconstructionists: Theodore Brameld, George Counts, Paulo Freire, and Henry Giroux.

_____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

6 12 18 24 30 36 Total

**SOURCE:** Originally prepared by Robert Leahy for *Becoming a Teacher: Accepting the Challenge of a Profession*, 3d ed., 1995. Revised by the author for inclusion in *Authentic Educating*, 2009, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., pp. 17–21. Used by permission of the author.

## Check Your Understanding 4.5

# Summary

Why Is Philosophy Important to Teachers?

- Knowledge of educational philosophy enables teachers to understand the complex political forces that influence schools, to evaluate more effectively current proposals for change, and to grow professionally. Professional teachers continually strive for a clearer, more comprehensive answer to basic philosophical questions.
- Most schools have a statement of philosophy that describes educational values and goals.
- Philosophy, which means "love of wisdom," is concerned with pondering the fundamental questions of life: What is truth? What is reality? What life is worth living?
- An educational philosophy is a set of beliefs about education, a set of principles to guide professional action.
- A teacher's educational philosophy is made up of personal beliefs about teaching and learning, students, knowledge, and what is worth knowing.

What Are the Branches of Philosophy?

- The branches of philosophy and the questions they address are (1) metaphysics (What is the nature of reality?), (2) epistemology (What is the nature of knowledge and is truth attainable?), (3) axiology (What values should one live by?), (4) ethics (What is good and evil, right and wrong?), (5) aesthetics (What is beautiful?), and (6) logic (What reasoning processes yield valid conclusions?).

What Are Five Modern Philosophical Orientations to Teaching?

- **Perennialism**—Students should acquire knowledge of enduring great ideas.
- **Essentialism**—Schools should teach students, in a disciplined and systematic way, a core of "essential" knowledge and skills.
- **Progressivism**—The aim of education should be based on the needs and interests of students.
- **Existentialism**—In the face of an indifferent universe, students should acquire an education that will enable them to assign meaning to their lives. Postmodernism, which is similar to existentialism, maintains that there are no absolute truths and disputes the certainty of scientific, or objective, explanations of reality.

- **Social reconstructionism**—In response to the significant social problems of the day, schools should take the lead in creating a new social order. Critical pedagogy, much like social reconstructionism, focuses on how education can promote social justice, especially for those who do not enjoy positions of power and influence in society. Feminist pedagogy, also similar to social reconstructionism, maintains that different voices and different ways of knowing tend not to be acknowledged in classrooms that are dominated by Eurocentric, patriarchal curricula.

What Psychological Orientations Have Influenced Teaching Philosophies?

- **Humanism**—Children are innately good, and education should focus on individual needs, personal freedom, and self-actualization.
- **Behaviorism**—By careful control of the educational environment and with appropriate reinforcement techniques, teachers can cause students to exhibit desired behaviors.
- **Constructivism**—Teachers should "understand students' understanding" and view learning as an active process in which learners construct meaning.

How Can You Develop Your Educational Philosophy?

- Instead of basing their teaching on only one educational philosophy, most teachers develop an eclectic educational philosophy.
- Professional teachers continually strive for a clearer, more comprehensive answer to basic philosophical questions.

## Professional Reflections And Activities

### Teacher's Journal

1. To illustrate educational philosophies in action, this chapter presents "portraits" of eight different teachers. Imagine that you are a colleague of one of these teachers—a teacher whose educational philosophy is very different from your own. Write that teacher a letter in which you react to his or her philosophical orientation to teaching. Your letter might include questions or concerns about the teacher's educational philosophy, as well as an explanation of why your educational philosophy is more appropriate for today's students.
2. Review the six philosophical and five psychological orientations discussed in this chapter. With reference to today's schools, what is the current status of each—that is, is it widespread or not? Which orientation do you think is most popular among teachers? Least popular?
3. Recall one of your favorite teachers at the elementary, middle, or high school levels. Which of the educational philosophies or psychological orientations to teaching described in this chapter best capture that teacher's approach to teaching? Write a descriptive sketch of that teacher in action. How has this teacher influenced your educational philosophy?

### Teacher's Research

1. Numerous organizations influence educational policy and practice in the United States. Visit the websites of two or more of the following organizations and compare the educational philosophies that are reflected in their goals, position statements, and political activities with regard to education:
   - Alternative Public Schools Inc. (APS)
   - American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
   - National Education Association (NEA)
   - Chicago Teachers Union (or other municipal teachers' organization)
   - National Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA)
   - Parents as Teachers (PAT)
   - Texas State Teachers Association (or other state teachers' organization)
2. Explore encyclopedias, bibliographies, periodicals, news sources, and other online reference works to research in greater detail the contributions of one of the educational philosophers included in this chapter. In a brief oral report, present your findings to the rest of your class.

### Observations and Interviews

1. Interview a teacher for the purpose of understanding his or her educational philosophy. Formulate your interview questions in light of the philosophical concepts discussed in this chapter and the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. 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? Discuss your findings with classmates.
2. Observe the class of a teacher at the level at which you plan to teach. Which of the six philosophies or five psychological orientations to teaching discussed in this chapter most characterizes this teacher? Describe the teacher–student interactions that result in your response.

## Professional Portfolio

Each month, prepare a written (or videotaped) statement in which you explain one of the following key elements of your educational philosophy (see Figure 4.1, on page 103). At the end of 5 months, you should have a statement for each set of beliefs.

- Beliefs about teaching and learning
- Beliefs about students
- Beliefs about knowledge
- Beliefs about what is worth knowing
- Personal beliefs in philosophical areas

As appropriate, revise your belief statements throughout the course and during the remainder of your teacher education program. On completion of your teacher education program, review your portfolio entry and make any appropriate revisions. The ability to provide a full explanation of your philosophy of education will be a definite advantage when you begin to look for your first job as a teacher.

## Shared Writing 4.1

Philosophical Foundations of U.S. Education