

mark. If you found that you had strong opinions—pro or con—about one or more of these teachers' positions, then you are beginning to get in touch with your educational philosophy. Let's leave the faculty room conversation, and take a closer, more orderly look at your own philosophical leanings. The following inventory can help you sort out tenets of your educational philosophy.

Inventory of Philosophies of Education

As you read through each of the following statements about schools and teaching, decide how strongly you agree or disagree. In a bit, we will help you interpret your results. Write your response to the left of each statement, using the following scale:

- 5 Agree strongly
- 4 Agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Disagree strongly

- _____ 1. A school curriculum should include a common body of information that all students should know.
- _____ 2. The school curriculum should focus on the great ideas that have survived through time.
- _____ 3. The gap between the real world and schools should be bridged through field trips, internships, and adult mentors.
- _____ 4. Schools should prepare students for analyzing and solving the social problems they will face beyond the classroom.
- _____ 5. Each student should determine his or her individual curriculum, and teachers should guide and help them.
- _____ 6. Students should not be promoted from one grade to the next until they have read and mastered certain key material.
- _____ 7. Schools, above all, should develop students' abilities to think deeply, analytically, and creatively, rather than focus on transient concerns like social skills and current trends.
- _____ 8. Whether inside or outside the classroom, teachers must stress the relevance of what students are learning to real and current events.
- _____ 9. Education should enable students to recognize injustices in society, and schools should promote projects to redress social inequities.
- _____ 10. Students who do not want to study much should not be required to do so.
- _____ 11. Teachers and schools should emphasize academic rigor, discipline, hard work, and respect for authority.
- _____ 12. Education is not primarily about workers and the world economic competition; learning should be appreciated for its own sake, and students should enjoy reading, learning, and discussing intriguing ideas.

- _____ 13. The school curriculum should be designed by teachers to respond to the experiences and needs of the students.
- _____ 14. Schools should promote positive group relationships by teaching about different ethnic and racial groups.
- _____ 15. The purpose of school is to help students understand themselves, appreciate their distinctive talents and insights, and find their own unique place in the world.
- _____ 16. For the United States to be competitive economically in the world marketplace, schools must bolster their academic requirements in order to train more competent workers.
- _____ 17. Teachers ought to teach from the classics, because important insights related to many of today's challenges and concerns are found in these Great Books.
- _____ 18. Since students learn effectively through social interaction, schools should plan for substantial social interaction in their curricula.
- _____ 19. Students should be taught how to be politically literate, and learn how to improve the quality of life for all people.
- _____ 20. The central role of the school is to provide students with options and choices. The student must decide what and how to learn.
- _____ 21. Schools must provide students with a firm grasp of basic facts regarding the books, people, and events that have shaped the nation's heritage.
- _____ 22. The teacher's main goal is to help students unlock the insights learned over time, so they can gain wisdom from the great thinkers of the past.
- _____ 23. Students should be active participants in the learning process, involved in democratic class decision making and reflective thinking.
- _____ 24. Teaching should mean more than simply transmitting the Great Books, which are replete with biases and prejudices. Rather, schools need to identify a new list of Great Books more appropriate for today's world, and prepare students to create a better society than their ancestors did.
- _____ 25. Effective teachers help students to discover and develop their personal values, even when those values conflict with traditional ones.
- _____ 26. Teachers should help students constantly reexamine their beliefs. In history, for example, students should learn about those who have been historically omitted: the poor, the non-European, women, and people of color.
- _____ 27. Frequent objective testing is the best way to determine what students know. Rewarding students when they learn, even when they learn small things, is the key to successful teaching.
- _____ 28. Education should be a responsibility of the family and community, rather than delegated to formal and impersonal institutions, such as schools.

Interpreting Your Responses

Write your responses to statements 1 through 25 in the following columns, and tally up your score in each column. (We will return to items 26 to 28 in a bit.) Each column is labeled with a philosophy and the name of the teacher who represented that view in this chapter's opening scenario (the charter school discussion). The highest possible score in any one column is 25, and the lowest possible score is 5. Scores in the 20s indicate strong agreement, and scores below 10 indicate disagreement with the tenets of a particular philosophy.

A	B	C	D	E
Essentialism (Jack)	Perennialism (Myra)	Progressivism (Mark)	Social Reconstructionism (Ted)	Existentialism (Cara)
1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
6. _____	7. _____	8. _____	9. _____	10. _____
11. _____	12. _____	13. _____	14. _____	15. _____
16. _____	17. _____	18. _____	19. _____	20. _____
21. _____	22. _____	23. _____	24. _____	25. _____
Scores _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Your scores in columns A through E, respectively, represent how much you agree or disagree with the beliefs of five major educational philosophies: essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, social reconstructionism, and existentialism. Check back to see if your scores reflect your initial reactions to these teachers' points of view. For example, if you agreed with Jack's proposal to create an "Academy," then you probably agreed with a number of the statements associated with essentialist education, and your score in this column may be fairly high.

Compare your five scores. What is your highest? What is your lowest? Which three statements best reflect your views on education? Are they congruent and mutually supporting? Looking at the statements that you least support, what do these statements tell you about your values? You may notice that your philosophical leanings, as identified by your responses to statements in the inventory, reflect your general outlook on life. For example, your responses may indicate whether you generally trust people to do the right thing, or if you believe that individuals need supervision. How have your culture, religion, upbringing, and political beliefs shaped your responses to the items in this inventory? How have your own education and life experiences influenced your philosophical beliefs?

Now that you have begun to examine varying beliefs about education, you may even want to lay claim to a philosophical label. But what do these philosophical labels mean? In the following pages we will introduce you to all five of these educational philosophies, and look at their impact in the classroom.

INTASC RAP 6.1

Putting Your Philosophy into the Classroom.

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INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

Where Do You Stand on the Philosophy Spectrum?

Note where you think your philosophy of education falls, and compare where you stand to where your colleagues do.