

# **Educational Psychology for Effective Teaching**

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## Educational Psychology and the Learning Environment

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to:

1

Identify three ways educational psychology relates to today's and tomorrow's classroom environment.

2

Explain the concept of *proactive teaching*.

3

Compare and contrast the qualities of effective teachers with the teaching skills contemporary educational psychology research suggests will be necessary for future teachers.

4

Describe three environmental factors in the classroom that impact student learning.

5

List four recent changes in U.S. culture and population that will define the characteristics of our nation's future students.

6

Explain how the three major national education reform acts, Rosa' Law, Race to the Top, and No Child Left Behind impact contemporary and future classrooms.

7

Relate three major characteristics of future students and explain how teacher awareness of these characteristics can assist in preparing for classroom instruction.

8

Compare and contrast the "artistic" and the "scientific" characteristics of "good" teachers.

9

Explain the importance of applying the findings of educational psychology research to the school environment.

## INTRODUCTION

Within their classrooms, teachers have always been the critical factor determining the academic and social success of students. From the time they arrive at school until they leave, teachers impact the lives of their students. Effective teachers recognize the importance of their influence and they prepare long before they arrive at school as they plan each lesson and they continue preparing after the school day ends as they consider teaching methodologies, methods of minimizing disruptive behavior, and design of future lesson plans to fit the diverse needs of their students.

Two generations ago Flanders (1990, pp. 86–87) aptly articulated the challenge of today's teachers.

We must be living in a new era when good intentions alone are not enough. One major change in this decade is that teachers are now being held accountable for the quality of learning in their classrooms more rigorously than in the past. Honor may be bestowed only on those who can combine good intentions with effective performance. We may have reached a point at which honor only becomes effective teachers.

Two major goals of this text are to explain how educational psychology can help prospective teachers prepare and facilitate the academic achievement and the social success of their future students.

## EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY TODAY AND TOMORROW

Educational psychology is a field of tremendous variety. In this section, we look at the responsibilities common among today's school professionals and expected trends that will impact tomorrow's classrooms.

### Defining the Discipline

As a discipline, educational psychology has been around for more than a century. As early as the 1880s, Louisa Parsons Hopkins wrote about recognizing the importance of psychology in education:

It would be as absurd for one to undertake to educate the young with no knowledge of . . . psychology, as for one to attempt to produce a sonata while ignorant of the phenomena of sound. (Hopkins, 1886, p. 3, as cited in Glover & Bruning, 1990)

Despite the early insight of Hopkins, many still debate the relationship of education and psychology and, thus, the definition of educational psychology. Several factors complicate the task of defining educational psychology.

“ Upon the subject of education . . . I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged. ”

ABRAHAM LINCOLN



First, it includes two disciplines: education and psychology. Clifford (1984) argues that combining education and psychology is appropriate. He defines educational psychology as applying the methods of psychology to studying the process of education. Others define educational psychology as knowledge gained from psychology and applied to the classroom (Grinder, 1981). Therefore, *educational psychologists* are often defined as those who apply the principles of psychology to education and who devote their professional lives to understanding learners, the learning process, and the instructional strategies that enhance learning.

Educational psychologists perform many different roles. Some design curriculum content and evaluate the impact of curriculum changes on student behavior and academic achievement; others are involved with computer-managed and computer-assisted instruction in the classroom. Many educational psychologists teach in university and college teacher-preparation programs. Their responsibilities are typically divided among teaching and researching the variables determining:

- the effectiveness of teaching methodologies
- how students learn
- how teachers can effectively interact and communicate with students, families, and other teachers
- how best to teach others.

The “scientific methodologies” (discussed later in the chapter) educational psychologists have used to answer these complex questions have been fruitful and, on many issues, answers are still being pursued.

Research in educational psychology has been ongoing for generations and, as a result, an accumulated knowledge base (or body of knowledge concerning the ‘science’ of teaching and learning) has been established (Biddle, Good, & Goodson, 1996; Christensen, 1996). This knowledge base includes such factors as:

- the environmental and cultural influences on the learner
- the cognitive functioning of students
- managing the classroom
- how students learn, and how all of these variables relate to teachers and teaching.



*The problems of tomorrow's teachers and the role of educational psychology will be more complex than in the past.*

Educational psychology's data base of information provides many options and suggestions on becoming a successful teacher (Clark, Hong, & Schoeppach, 1996). A major purpose of this text is to acquaint you with the research findings that can foster effective teaching.

Current trends in educational psychology indicate that the following skills will be necessary for future teachers and other school personnel:

### INTASC Standard 2 **Learner differences.**

- Decision-making skills in the classroom as teachers work with students, families, fellow teachers, and administrators.
- An awareness of the special problems faced by non-English speaking students, minorities and developmentally delayed students. This implies that language skills, understanding concerning the norms of subcultures and student cognitive and social development patterns are critical to learning. Education can and should be a great equalizer; a means of upward mobility for students, regardless of race, economic background, or geography (Farr, 2011, p. 23).
- Skills necessary to solve the more traditional problems in today's classrooms include classroom management, enhancing cognitive development, motivation, and appropriate evaluation.
- Other factors, such as economic conditions and technology, will have a major impact on future schools and will require new methods of learning delivery systems.
- As the complexity of our society increases, so will the need for teachers to have a thorough background in theories of learning, development, and cognition. According to Guyton and Fielstein (1991, p. 207), "Although information is necessary, it cannot be expected by itself to modify learned attitudes."

Two key elements for student learning are:  
1) Teacher/student communication.  
2) Very specific, well-defined rules for student behavior in the classroom.

As Erasmus (1989, p. 274) aptly expressed,

Teachers must be able to reach beyond their worlds to touch that of their students and assist students to do the same. . . . [W]e (teachers) must learn to listen and listen to learn.

The need for "real world" teacher skills suggests that educational psychology is of prime importance in addressing contemporary and future needs of our nation's teachers. Therefore, let us begin with a discussion of a "good teacher" and defining today's and tomorrow's student learner.

## THE TEACHING PROFESSION

What makes a teacher good? Is the teacher an artist or a scientist? And why teach? What are the advantages? These are the issues in this section.

### A “Good” Teacher

As we ponder our educational careers, most of us can remember exceptional teachers. Think about your favorite teacher(s). Can you remember their teaching techniques or what they did in class that made them special? If you remember characteristics such as friendliness, good management skills, knowledge of subject matter, were academically demanding yet their classes were interesting and fun, then you agree with the research literature in Educational Psychology.

Will you be happy with your chosen profession? A recent poll found that most of today’s teachers are happy with their profession. And beginning teachers are critically important as they continuously revitalize and bring enthusiasm to our schools (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010; Ripley, 2010). Seventy percent of Americans would support their children becoming teachers (Bushaw & McNee, 2009).

Despite the myth “some people are born teachers,” prospective teachers become “good” teachers through hard work, study and experience. Contemporary Educational Psychology has identified the typical characteristics of good and/or effective teachers.

“In fact, we know more about effective teaching than ever; unfortunately much more than we use” (Hersh, 2009).

How can you best prepare to become a good teacher? Are there implications for the types of courses you should pursue in your academic curriculum? Can you identify a number of positive factors or indicators for future teachers? In short, what does it take to be a good teacher? It takes an individual who cares enough about students to invest the time and energy needed to become an expert manager of the classroom, subject content, and student learning.

In the play *A Man for All Seasons*, an ambitious young man named Richard Rich asks Sir Thomas More for help in getting a government job. The chancellor urges him instead to become a teacher, saying, “You’d be a fine teacher, perhaps even a great one.”

“And if I were, who would know it?” the aspiring politician complains. To which More rejoins, “You, your pupils, your friends, God. Not a bad public, that.”

Many young people, like you, are ready for the challenge; they are excited about their future teaching careers. “Todd Williams,” whose development we will follow throughout the text, exemplifies such enthusiasm.



## TODD WILLIAMS...

was beginning his career as a teacher. He was convinced that teaching eighth-grade history was going to be an exciting, yet challenging, task. The principal, Ms. Wickersham, was showing him around his new working environment, Thomas Jefferson Middle School. “Todd, I’d like you to meet some of your fellow teachers.”

They chatted as they walked through the halls until Ms. Wickersham knocked on a door. The door was labeled with a sign that read “Through This Door Walk Some of the Brightest Students in the County. Welcome.” Ms. Stephens opened the door and exchanged pleasantries. Many of Ms. Stephens’ comments stood out in Todd’s mind: “I’ve got a good, hard-working group this year. I’m very proud of them. Jim and Pat are a little behind but they are coming along. The class is excited about the plans for the district computer fair.”

Todd noticed the class. The students were busy, hardly noticing the visitors. Some were working with computers; others were discovering “real” and “imaginary” numbers from problems on the board. Yes, there was noise, but it was healthy noise, the noise of students going about their tasks—learning, being excited, asking questions. The heading on the board, “Einsteins for Today,” had 10 students’ names beneath it. They had 100 percent correct answers on today’s homework assignment.

As they approached Mr. Humphrey’s Advanced History Class, Todd and Ms. Wickersham could overhear comments coming from the open classroom door. “Well, it seems that you feel that it was wrong for such a man as Galileo to be persecuted by the inquisitorial court for his opinions?” “Yes,” a student shot back, “it was wrong of the court because Galileo was right.”

“Yes, Gino,” responded Mr. Humphrey, “Galileo was right in believing his astronomical discoveries and for saying the earth did move. But would you be so quick to defend a racist who discovered a cure for cancer?”

There was silence, until a student asked, “What’s that got to do with anything, especially Galileo?”

Mr. Humphrey replied, “Well, how many things did Galileo personally believe that were wrong? Did he not share the ignorance of his time? Did he not believe in the divine right of kings, in slavery, in the permanent servility of serfs and women? Would he not, by our standards, be labeled a bigot?” There was silence. Mr. Humphrey prodded his students. “Think, where is the discrepancy in my logic?” Just as a student was about to respond, Mr. Humphrey noticed his visitors and, smiling, walked to the door; Todd yearned for the class to continue.

As Todd and Ms. Wickersham were returning to the office, she commented, “Todd, we are like most middle schools, where teachers

and students are concerned. We	achievement—writing sophisticated
have teachers whom I consider to	computer programs, producing plays,
be the best, the very best—and we	and like Mr. Humphrey’s class, debat-
have some who need summer work-	ing world issues—and we have some
shops to improve their skills, and	in special classes who are working on
a few who perhaps shouldn’t be	basic skills. But, that’s what we’re here
teachers. We have students who	for—to educate all our students. I hope
are three and four years ahead in	you enjoy it here. I know I do.”

### PROACTIVE EXERCISE

Table 1.1 lists techniques offered by educational psychology that can have a positive impact on the confidence, pride and self-reliance of minority and immigrant students, students from economically poor backgrounds, and students with impairments.

Like Todd and his new principal, Ms. Wickersham, many of today’s educators remain optimistic about the future of the teaching profession. They realize that their effectiveness is important to students’ lives (Semadeni, 2010). This optimism is fueled by the fact that today’s social scientists can predict with a great deal of certainty many future educational trends. You can use these trends to prepare for your teaching career. Future teachers will face many of the same challenges that teachers have faced in the past. These perennial challenges include motivating students; maintaining discipline; and working with families, fellow teachers, and administrators, all with unique personalities and expectations.

However, future challenges for teachers like Todd also will include the continued increase in the number of minority and immigrant students, including non-English-speaking students; an increase in the number of students with learning disabilities; integration of technology into the classroom; and a dramatic increase in the number of older students in higher education. What alternatives does educational psychology suggest for teaching students who are labeled “bright,” “creative,” “minority,” “learning impaired,” or “non-English-speaking”?

These specific issues will be discussed in later chapters, but there are many other decisions that you, as a teacher, will have to make regardless of where you teach. As Shirley Rau, former Idaho Teacher of the Year, suggests, your success as a teacher, counselor, or other education specialist will hinge on your ability to recognize these issues and apply your innovations and skills to make decisions that resolve or reduce the magnitude of the problems.

“Tomorrow’s teachers must be risktakers, innovators. There can be no complacency. The students that we encourage to teach should be those who sometimes step over the boundaries of what is acceptable. Students who question grades, who question methods, who force us to rethink our ideas—those students should be teachers.”

SHIRLEY RAU, FORMER  
IDAHO TEACHER OF  
THE YEAR

**INTASC Standard 7** Planning for instruction.**TABLE 1.1****Techniques to Aid Special-Needs Students**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Suggested Activities to Enhance Confidence and Self-Reliance among Students</b>
Minority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Design class activities that include various cultures, For example, you might have assignments requiring studies of famous people of various cultures and races. Such people might include Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Lech Walesa, Nelson Mandela, and Liu Xiaobo.</li> <li>2. Show films and videos portraying the cultural history of various races and cultures and invite minority guest speakers who can be viewed as role models to facilitate positive feelings of students about themselves and their classmates.</li> </ol>
Students from economically poor backgrounds	<p>Use academic reinforcers suggested in Chapters 6 and 12. Additionally, as with all your students, include these students in leadership activities, Serving as teacher assistant for a day or week, class officer, class representative, editor of the class paper, or student council representative illustrates to students and peers they can succeed. Familiarize yourself with your school's services for such students. Many schools offer 'free breakfast and/or lunch programs, as well as pre and after school care.</p>
Physically disabled	<p>Remember that physical disability does not imply mental or social impairment, Typically, the same social and academic activities can be used with these students as with your other students. Also, include physically impaired students in physical activities. Make modifications and use other students as substitutes to provide the opportunity for students who are impaired to participate in games and sports. Students' self-reliance and confidence can be adversely affected by exclusion. Provide students who are mentally impaired with academic material that ensures success. More detailed examples of techniques for students with special needs will be discussed in Chapter 5.</p>

**The Teacher as Artistic Scientist**

Effective teaching is **contextual**, meaning that the success of any teacher behavior depends on the immediate situation (Christianbury, 2011, p. 48) and teachers must adapt their approaches to fit each classroom. As you recall your exceptional teachers of the past (or present), their artistic attributes might have included personality, spontaneity, and positive display of emotions. Teaching, obviously, engages the “artistry” of the individual who



teaches and produces the “works of art”—students who will become successful academically, socially, and in their chosen field. Yet, when you consider the act of teaching, teachers use the methods of science to instruct, question, counsel, evaluate, or produce a work of art. The goal of this text is to provide you with teaching skills generated by the science of educational psychology. The artistry will be, in large part, your creativity and personality and the enthusiasm you bring to the teaching profession. This suggests that teacher and student “curiosity” and “innovation” are critical to the learning process.

“ Teaching may be the greatest of all arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit ”  
JOHN STEINBECK

## Curiosity and Innovation

Effective teachers are always looking for better ways to teach (Highlighted & Underlined, 2010). The good news is that the practice of teaching is learnable (Ball & Forzani, 2011). The bad news, as previously noted, is that we know a lot more about effective teaching methods than we are using (Hersh, 2009). For example, when the level of noise in a classroom interferes with learning, some teachers respond by trying to shout over the noise. Although this is a common response, it seldom works. Effective teachers are willing to explore different approaches. For example, instead of raising their voices, these teachers may pause, using eye contact to quiet their class. Other teachers may use **proximity control**, which simply means that they walk to the noisiest part of the room and stay there until the noise level subsides (discussed in detail in Chapter 12).

These methods may not work with all groups; there may be methods that work better, as we will explore in later chapters. This is why curiosity, experimentation, and risk-taking are so important to teachers. Throughout their careers, successful teachers continue to learn (Rothman, 2009). Teachers who reflect on their experiences increase the likelihood that their teaching will improve and they will become productive members of their learning community (Reames, 2010). But to challenge students to explore their capabilities, effective teachers, like Ms. Stephens and Mr. Humphrey, whose classes Todd visited, are willing to take risks, such as challenging students to “compete in the district computer fair” or raising such issues as the reactionary beliefs during the time of Galileo. As Friday (1990, p. 99) describes, effective teachers find a way to touch and shape lives.

It has long been clear to me that teaching is at once the most difficult and the most honorable of professions. We have all been touched by the example, guidance, and motivation of a teacher whose often reluctant pupils we were. We can each recall a moment of insight or truth when caught in the act of learning. None of us owes larger debts for whatever we may have become, for whatever we may have been able to accomplish, than we owe to teachers in our past lives whose total devotion to young people



*Effective teachers educate and address the problems of students at all levels.*

“ I frequently ask students what qualities they look for in their teachers. The top answers are always the same: knowledge of subject, laughter, fairness, and a sense of joy. When pressed to give me the number one quality, the response is usually, ‘Sense of Humor.’ ”

CHARLES  
SPOSATO, FORMER  
MASSACHUSETTS  
TEACHER OF THE YEAR

and to their discipline has been their chief reward and the reason we honor teachers and the teaching profession.

The characteristics of those teachers who form special bonds with their students are difficult to measure but fortunately we have a considerable body of research in educational psychology literature. The findings to date focus more upon classroom organization, time management, and student/teacher interactions, which can be more easily quantified than such personal qualities as warmth and individual concern. However, Charles Sposato, former Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, whom we quote in the sidebar, notes that students are very aware of these issues. What are the results of the research to date? Can educational psychology prescribe techniques that will guarantee success in the classroom? Let us quickly rephrase our question. Can educational psychology offer recommendations and/or techniques that will maximize the likelihood of your being successful in the classroom and becoming that special teacher? The answer is a resounding “yes.”

Chapter 9 will discuss in detail the characteristics of such teachers, but briefly summarized, the research to date (Armstrong, Henson, & Savage, 2009) indicates the following:

- The effective teacher plays a central, dominant role in the classroom but involves students in planning and organization.
- Successful teachers set high academic standards and communicate those standards to students.
- Effective teachers work mostly with the entire class but often with small groups, sometimes providing independent work.
- Effective teachers maintain a brisk lesson pace, requiring overt student participation.
- Effective teachers use little criticism, shape student responses so that they are correct, hold students responsible for their work, and treat students equitably.
- Effective teachers set and maintain clear rules for students’ academic and social behavior.

What implications do the characteristics of successful teachers have for prospective teachers? How do teachers feel about their profession; and

perhaps most important, how will you feel about your chosen profession after teaching for a year? Let us relate the advice of Duane Obermier, former Nebraska Teacher of the Year.



## A Teacher's Class

**NAME:** Duane Obermier, former Nebraska Teacher of the Year

**PROFILE:** Mr. Obermier teaches Speech, English, and Creative Writing at Grand Island Senior High, Grand Island, Nebraska.

**QUESTION:** Describe the rewards you find in teaching.

**M**y feelings about teaching can best be summarized in a few simple statements: Be well prepared. Constantly strive to improve your teaching skills. Set high standards. Be flexible. Be honest. Focus on the students and their needs. Treat students courteously. Apply the Golden Rule generously, but let natural consequences happen.

I firmly believe in treating students like fellow human beings who have feelings just like I do. They don't appreciate being embarrassed or humiliated or confronted with problems in front of their peers. But they do respond to kindness, encouragement, a friendly tease, and a smile. I try to teach manners in my classroom by being mannerly to my students. "John, I never interrupt you when you're speaking. Please don't interrupt me." Also, I believe that working and learning at school can and should be fun. I joke and laugh frequently with my students. In addition, I believe that there may well

be times when some hurt or crisis that a student is experiencing is more important than what is going on in my classroom that particular day.

I do respond to students' feelings and needs, but I am not one of those wishy-washy let-each-student-do-his-own-thing we'll-all-get-along-types. Seldom is progress made by protecting students from the consequences of their behavior. "If you skip class you get detention. If you don't do your work you get a failing grade. If you don't meet deadlines, the publication doesn't come out on time."

The main reward teaching offers me is the hundreds and hundreds of relationships I've had the opportunity to develop. I thoroughly enjoy seeing and visiting with former students and I don't just mean those who have graduated. It's fun to walk the halls during passing periods and see juniors and seniors whom I had in class as sophomores. It's interesting to me that a friendly relationship can be maintained even with the students who didn't do well in the class . . . even those who failed. Here's an example from last summer: I was jogging near my home and a student from second semester swung in next to me riding his bicycle. This student was definitely "at risk" in our school and had been anything but academically successful



in my class. I sent him to the office a couple of times for not doing his work; he had trouble with the spelling exams, and he ended up with a failing grade. As I jogged and he pedaled we talked, laughed a little, and I encouraged him to be back in school in the fall. He is back, he's in my class again, and I'm confident that he'll pass this time. In fact, the improvement in his work has permitted me to send his

guardian an "up" slip just a couple of days ago.

The other relationships that teaching has provided me are with my co-workers at Grand Island Senior High and with teachers from other schools. What a great bunch of people! Words like talented, dedicated, creative, dynamic, sensitive, and caring are appropriate descriptions for my colleagues. I feel privileged to be a part of them. ■

## Why Teach? The Advantages

Like Duane Obermier, many teachers report that they love teaching and have no regrets concerning their career decision. If you question teachers about why they teach, the response will often be "I value the profession and the responsibility". The average teacher's salary today for high school teachers is just over \$56,000 and the average for middle-level teachers is just over \$52,000 a year [salaries retrieved on Feb 20, 2011 at [www.payscale.com/research/us/all\\_k-12\\_teachers/salary](http://www.payscale.com/research/us/all_k-12_teachers/salary)]. The average starting salary is about \$36,000.

Hopefully your future students will describe you the same way you describe the best teachers you had in your educational career. Let us now turn to the characteristics of your future students and the teacher/learner relationship.

## THE STUDENTS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

Changes in society affect our schools in important ways. Today's changes are dramatically altering the characteristics and nature of our student population. For example, we are entering an era in which young people will be in short supply. Since 1983, and for the first time in our nation's history, the population of people over 65 is greater than the population of teenagers; and the difference is growing. It will challenge us to find new ways to involve this large segment of our population in efforts to improve our schools. Immigration is another important factor currently impacting American education. More than 5 million children of immigrants entered U.S. public schools between 2000 and 2010. Approximately 3.5 million of these children are from homes where English is not the first language. During the same time period, 150 languages were represented in our nation's schools. Today, one out of every three Americans is a member of a minority, one in six U.S. residents are

"Teachers who stay in the profession value interpersonal relationships and working with other people. On balance, most teachers find their careers satisfying, enjoy students, and the challenges teaching affords them and their students" (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 133).

**MYTH:**  
Students are about the same today as they were in the past and will be in the future.

Hispanic, and in less than a decade there will be no majority or ethnic group in the United States. Every American will be a member of a minority group, (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Think about the many ways that these changes affect teachers. For example, cultural values and language can become barriers as you work with families and students from other cultures. But, along with such challenges come new opportunities. For example, having culturally diverse classes can be a definite advantage because it affords you and your students opportunities to examine the contributions each group has made to the development and enrichment of our nation (Henson, 2010).

**REALITY:**  
Our student population is experiencing dramatic changes.

## Educationally At-Risk Students

Our educational system faces a challenge in attempting to educate the increasing number of “educationally at-risk” students. Educationally at-risk students are defined as those children whose chances for graduating from high school are small. In America, almost 7,000 students drop out every day (Bushaw & McNee, 2009). In African American communities and in some Latino communities and Native American communities, the dropout rate is almost 80 percent (Azzam, 2009).

One of the largest groups of poor students, and often the most neglected group is rural children. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Provasnik et al., 2007), 35 percent of rural students live below the national poverty level. Another 26.3 percent live just barely above the poverty line. Poverty is defined as an income of \$25,000 or less for a family of four (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006).

Why is it that in a society that has one of the highest living standards in the world, we continue to experience an increase in the number of educationally at-risk students? A number of social factors contribute to this dilemma.

Poverty, language barriers, children born to young unmarried females, and students with impairments add to the school-age at-risk population. Poverty is more common among children than among any other age group (Reed & Sautter, 1990). In the next decade, the number of children in poverty will increase, as will the number of youths eligible for Head Start programs. James Bryant Jr. (2011) has noted the inequitable treatment of rural schools. Furthermore, recent education policies from NCLB (No Child Left Behind) to R2T (Race to the Top), both discussed later in the chapter, seem to be



*Having culturally diverse classes can be a definite advantage because it affords teachers and students opportunities to examine the contributions that each group has made to the development and enrichment of our nation.” (Henson, 2011)*

urban centered (Dillon, 2010). The United States leads all the industrialized nations in its rate of adolescent pregnancy, a significant factor in the level of poverty among children. Adding to this list are the 1 million student-age run-aways each year (Banks, Kopassi, & Wilson, 1991).

## The Classroom Environment

The relationship and interactions among students, teachers, and the school environment have direct effects on learning and behavior. School climate and policy significantly impact on the academic and social activities of students and teachers in and out of the classroom. The following case study demonstrates one town's attempts to define and create a learning environment in its new school.

### CASE STUDY

A new middle school was to be constructed in Cross Creek. The funding had been secured by public vote on bonds. The town council had appointed a committee to recommend structure, environment, climate, and school policy for the new school. Several committee members were committed to having the “best” middle school possible for their community.

However, during the first committee meeting, there was confusion about how best to proceed. Some wanted to hire consultants; others suggested using school building plans of neighboring towns. The debate continued for two hours. Finally, Nell Gray, a former school counselor, now retired and respected throughout the community for her honesty and candor, rose to speak. “I sense the committee truly wants to make our new school the best possible. Perhaps, an appropriate beginning would be asking pertinent questions. Despite press reports that often suggest the opposite, many schools in our state and nation are truly outstanding. Why not take advantage of their success? We could identify a number of these schools and simply study their characteristics. We could search out answers to the most obvious questions: What are the characteristics of effective schools? What do they emphasize academically? What is the climate of such schools? How do they maintain discipline? How are effective schools organized in terms of class size? What are their policies on grading and retention? What is the management style of their administrators? What teaching methods are used by their teachers? What are the social and academic characteristics of their students?”

Gray paused, and, after several seconds, a ninth-grade teacher, Otis Webb, spoke. “I noticed an article in a teaching journal just yesterday that summarizes

the characteristics of schools considered to be outstanding. I'll bring copies to our next meeting.” Sharon DeRidder reminded the committee of the outstanding reputation of Roosevelt High in Loudon County and suggested some committee members should visit to glean ideas.

The committee meeting continued with renewed enthusiasm.

We wish Cross Creek well in its efforts to build a “good” school. We feel they are off to a good start.

This description of planning for Cross Creek Middle School provides one example of the classroom fraternity—the congregation of teachers, counselors, students, families, administrators, and other school professionals who determine and define activities within a school environment. Nell Gray was correct; this country benefits from an abundance of excellent schools and teachers (Berliner & Biddle, 1997). Recent research on successful school environments focuses on teacher behavior in the classroom and how schools design curriculum and manage students, both academically and socially. The research demonstrates that the activities of teachers, schools, and students are critical. They significantly impact student social and academic progress (Berliner, 1990, Gronlund & Wough, 2009).



*Births among very young mothers are dramatically illustrated by the fact that every day in America, 40 teenage girls give birth to their third child.” (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2010)*

## EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Some schools are more effective than others, and the school students attend can make a significant difference in level of academic achievement. This section presents the characteristics of effective schools in the areas of instruction, evaluation, communication and training, climate, and discipline.

### Instructional Emphasis

In reviewing the research on effective schools, one of the most consistent findings is that effective schools emphasize instruction. The instructional focus is pervasive and understood by faculty, students, and school administrators.

Effective schools emphasize the basic skills of reading, writing, and math.



The curriculum of effective schools is planned and purposeful but offers some electives for students. Most of the school day is devoted to academics, and there is an emphasis on acquisition of basic skills (reading, writing, and math). Although learning tasks in effective schools are planned at the appropriate level of difficulty for students, effective schools typically have high and uniform standards of academic achievement, and school activities are focused toward well-defined academic objectives.

Study and homework are important in effective schools and are typically coupled with immediate teacher feedback. Most homework is assigned by teachers, and because the impact of homework on learning is affected by the extent students complete homework assignments, and because teachers have limited control over student behavior outside the classroom, teachers must establish clear policy communicating the consequences for failure to do assignments. However, failure to complete homework might result from external factors outside student control. Therefore, teachers should monitor, be aware, consult with students and families and, when necessary, adjust expectations and policy.

### Evaluation

Effective schools use systematic evaluation procedures to determine student progress. Student progress is continually assessed to diagnose, evaluate, and provide feedback. Student progress is typically recognized by the public and governmental agencies via achievement test scores, graduation rates, academic awards, and other official recognitions of accomplishment. Effective schools accept responsibility for the outcomes of instruction and use achievement measures for program evaluation.

### Academic Expectations

Students and families in effective schools are aware of instructional requirements and know students are expected to meet high academic expectations (Duke & Jacobson, 2011). Teachers communicate to students that mastery of learning tasks is expected and includes evaluation demonstrating mastery. Principals of effective schools attend to the quality of instruction and stress the importance of continually improving instruction. The principal consistently communicates to teachers, students, staff, and families, the school's commitment to academic achievement.

Staff training is important in effective schools. Teachers work collaboratively (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2010). Development activities examine alternative teaching methods to provide teachers with new techniques to use in the classroom. Staff training is also used to maintain and promote successful learning outcomes. Both principals and teachers in effective schools act on the assumption they can solve their school's problems.

Effective schools use evaluation to measure student progress and to promote learning. Effective teachers work together to provide an orderly and safe school environment.



Instructor  
Manual

## School Climate

Several factors in the school environment influence student achievement (DuFour, 2011; Gronlund & Waugh, 2009). Effective schools maintain an orderly and safe climate conducive to learning and teaching (Kraft, 2010). Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for students to discuss social and academic issues (Duplechain et al., 2008). Typically, there is a well-defined goal of making learning pleasurable (Yelon, 1996). There is also a sense of community. Most students in effective schools willingly participate in the educational process and engage in extracurricular activities provided by the school.

Principals and teachers in effective schools have a sense of responsibility to their students (Jones, 1990). They are empathetic, have personal interactions and enjoy rapport with students. Teachers feel they have authority and support from administration and they can use their judgment when dealing with problems. Effective schools use staff developmental activities to promote a positive school climate and immediately address undesirable staff attitudes. Staff development programs focus on teachers sharing successful methods (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

## Discipline

Research shows that ‘good’ schools have fair but well-defined rules concerning discipline (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Effective schools can be very small, very large, or somewhere in between. Teachers, families, and students are made aware of school rules concerning discipline. For example, absences have been found to decrease in those schools who immediately notify families of students’ absences (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Personnel in good schools learn to be firm but fair. However, firmness is not to be construed as harshness. Instead of punitive discipline, teachers provide respectful directives. For example, a teacher may tell students “please take your seats now” (Hanny, 1994).

Effective teachers maintain discipline in their classrooms.

## School and Class Size

There appears to be no relationship between the size of schools and school achievement. As stated previously, effective schools can be very small, very large, or somewhere in between. Perhaps there is no relationship between school size and achievement because both small and large schools can have positive characteristics. Large high schools usually have more diverse curricular offerings. Small schools typically have more social cohesiveness, teacher cooperation, and positive interactions between teachers and students.

The relationship between class size and student achievement is not well defined. There is no relationship between class size and achievement when class size is within a range of 20 to 40 students (Butter, 1983). However, class

Research studies on the effectiveness of class size on achievement are inconclusive.

sizes below 20 students have been found advantageous for remedial students, impaired students, disadvantaged students, and students in the early grades. Carson and Badarack (1989) reported small achievement gains in small classes, and Johnston (1990) reported improved teacher morale. After several years of studying the effects of class size, Nye et al. (1994, p. 4) reported that “small is far better” maintaining class size is often associated with increased student achievement. However, the practices teachers employ are as important as the size of the class. In future chapters, we address those teacher practices.



### Student Study Guide



## PROACTIVE TEACHING

Throughout this text we define methods and techniques educational psychology provides the proactive teacher. Our proposed solutions will be based on research that has examined successful methodologies used by teachers in the classroom environment. Typical problems you will face in your teaching career are listed under “Classroom Situations” with “Proactive Alternatives.”

### CLASSROOM SITUATION

You hope to stimulate an interesting, relevant learning climate in your classroom. A sense of community in the classroom encourages students and builds a sense of confidence (Redman & Redman, 2011). In addition to the typical textbook instructional material, you want to add contemporary information related to subject matter.

### PROACTIVE ALTERNATIVES

Plan to use easily accessible, contemporary material on topics related to curriculum content. A good example is current news items and reports. Current news is accessible and relevant topics can be used to enhance and stimulate classroom instruction. Selected TV programs and field trips can be used to demonstrate relevance and importance of subject matter.

## NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

This chapter began with a discussion of the teaching profession and the specific traits of successful schools: students and teachers. The following examines national issues presenting challenges to future teachers, including laws impacting educational reform, racial prejudice, sex discrimination, drug abuse, sex education, and AIDS awareness education.

### Racial Prejudice

Despite the dearth of interracial interaction in some classrooms, interaction between races is the norm in many schools. As a teacher, you have a unique opportunity to impact students' attitudes about racial prejudice. By helping

students realize that interracial interaction merits your approval, you increase the probability of students feeling comfortable with interracial friendships and experiences.

Students can be exposed to positive models via visitors to the class, public media, and literature. Students should be exposed to African Americans, whites, Latin Americans, Native Americans, Asians, and other nationalities who interact positively with each other in a variety of vocational and social settings.

One area that is extremely difficult to manage is the role modeling among peers. In many classrooms, identifying peers who can serve as models of interracial interaction for other students is difficult. However, appropriate role models can be very important. You might begin with your potential as a role model. Students, especially younger students, respond to a member of another race as they see their teacher responding to that person. It is thus imperative that you respond consistently and positively to members of all racial and ethnic groups. Many teachers have a tendency to be more paternalistic, protective, defensive, or reinforcing in their responses to one race or minorities. Something as innocuous as shortening a student’s name, calling students by nicknames, and touching students may be looked upon as paternalistic or discriminatory if confined to one group. Your approval is a major means of demonstrating acceptance. For that reason, and for ethical reasons, no group should enjoy a greater measure of your approval than another.

### Sex Discrimination

During the last decade, there has been a great deal of concern about sexual stereotyping in our society. Despite progress, social norms often continue to condition females to behave in a dependent, submissive, and cautious manner. This, despite the fact approximately 80 percent of working age women in our society are in the workforce and the number are growing. The evolution of how women have been and continue to be stereotyped is illustrated by the following:

Lifestyle Patterns for Females		
1950s	1990s	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get married</li> <li>• Have children</li> <li>• Be a ‘housewife’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get a job</li> <li>• Get married or stay single</li> <li>• Perhaps have children</li> <li>• Continue a career, become a home-maker or both</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to find a job</li> <li>• Pay off education bills</li> <li>• Get married or stay single</li> <li>• Perhaps have children</li> <li>• Continue a career, share home-making chores or both</li> </ul>

Group assignments and compliments on group progress can promote racial acceptance. Your behavior toward students can and will affect the behaviors of your students toward each other.

Teacher praise and role playing are effective methods for teaching students to respect differences in gender, ethnicity and race.

Race—A social group identified by its ancestry.

Minority—A group of people historically defined as being less in number but more recently is often characterized as being disadvantaged.

Ethnicity—A social group sharing a cultural heritage.



On the other hand, males are conditioned to conceal emotion, be tough and compete. One way to help minimize sex discrimination is for teachers to make deliberate but appropriate attempts to reinforce students for behaviors that are antithetical sexual stereotyping. Girls, in particular, should be encouraged to take leadership roles, choose unconventional academic activities, and accept new challenges. We are encouraged when we hear teachers saying, “Sharon, I’m glad you’re thinking about a career in law,” “Tamarie, I like the way you provide leadership in student council,” “Stan, you have an ability to show compassion for others,” “Calvin, the social skills you’re developing in your enrichment course will be very useful in the future.”

Another avenue for encouraging atypical sex-role behavior is role-play. Suppose you want to reinforce unconventional sex-role behaviors in students. You could simulate different types of vocational situations and have students assume non-stereotypic roles in those situations (for instance, a female department head interviewing a male for a staff position; a female doctor working with a male nurse in diagnosing a male’s medical problem. You could use these occasions to recognize appropriate, vocational behaviors of students.

### Drug Abuse

In asking “What knowledge is of most worth?” the nineteenth-century philosopher Herbert Spencer grouped human activities under five headings and then arranged them in order of importance. At the top of the list he put those activities directly related to self-preservation.

“Above all,” Spencer wrote, “man needs knowledge to guard himself against the incapacities and slow annihilation that his own bad habits bring him.”

Many topics dramatically illustrate the importance of values among students; but perhaps none more than *drug abuse*. The first 15 years of the Gallup Poll of the American Public’s Attitudes toward Public Schools found the public considered discipline the major problem in our schools. In 1986, drug abuse replaced discipline as the number one problem in the schools and continues to remain so (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1996). If you teach secondary students, and unfortunately even elementary, the chances are very good you will face drug issues among your students. The adage, “there are two kinds of drug abusers among our youth—boys and girls” is much more painful than humorous. Just how serious is drug abuse among our youth? The U.S. Department of Education (2010) provides the following statistics:

- Children are beginning alcohol use at an early age; the average beginning age is 11 years.

- One-half of high school students are classified as regular drinkers, one in three drinks heavily at least once a week, and one in four has a serious drinking problem. Approximately 4 million youths under the age of 17 are alcoholics, and children as young as 9 are being treated for alcoholism.
- Teen drinkers account for nearly 50 percent of all fatal automobile accidents.
- Some 80 percent of high school seniors have used marijuana, and two-thirds of American students will have used an illicit drug other than marijuana and alcohol before they graduate from high school.

As a future teacher, drug use among students will provide you with many challenges. In Chapter 12 you will learn that an effective strategy for dealing with classroom discipline is through preventive efforts. Although there is indisputable evidence that a greater return is given on money spent on preventing drug abuse than on money spent treating drug abusers, Americans have been reluctant to invest in drug prevention. The average American who does not have a drug habit will pay between \$850 and \$1000 next year to treat our society's drug and alcohol abuse problems. Yet, during the same time, Americans will spend only about \$1.75 on each child to prevent drug abuse (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, 2010). As a proactive teacher, it is important to take advantage of any prevention programs offered by your school environment and to be an advocate of such programs.

## AIDS Education

By 1991, 270,000 Americans had been diagnosed as having contracted acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). In 1996 this number exceeded 513,000 (Blake, 1996). In 2011 this number had increased to over one million with 56,000 new cases being reported yearly ([www.wncap.org](http://www.wncap.org)). Approximately 35 million adults and 1.5 million children worldwide are currently living with AIDS. About one-fifth of all AIDS victims are in their twenties. Because the incubation period may be five years or more, we know that some AIDS victims contracted the disease while in high school and college.

As a future school professional, you will share the responsibility for educating about the spread of AIDS and for assisting the school and community to cope with its presence. The following classroom learning experiences are suggested by (Woodring, 1995):

- Answering imaginary letters from early adolescents with questions about AIDS in the form of a newspaper advice column.
- Writing about, or participating in, a group discussion on teacher and student attitudes concerning the social-ethical issues involved in AIDS prevention.

- Simulating a community task force that is charged with developing policy for assisting a person with AIDS in the school.
- Practicing using the AIDS National Hotline telephone service.
- Writing an editorial for the school or community newspaper on the need for an AIDS education program.
- Serving on a student committee to write a brochure to disseminate facts about prevention of AIDS.
- Serving on a student committee to review audiovisual materials on AIDS appropriate for use in schools.

As you continue to prepare for your new career, we encourage you to take advantage of every opportunity to learn more about AIDS. Your awareness of the policies in your school concerning teaching and advising your students concerning AIDS awareness and prevention is essential.

## NATIONAL LAWS IMPACTING TODAY'S CLASSROOMS

### Rosa's Law

The many factors related to becoming an effective teacher are dramatically illustrated by recent national laws. Some like **Rosa's Law**, signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2010 legitimately reflect the concern in updating and clarifying terminology used in defining the mental abilities of students. Rosa's Law replaces the term *mental retardation* with *intellectual disabilities* in all federal articles related to education. Most educational institutions, academic journals and textbooks, as well as a number of states, have already adopted the new terminology.

### No Child Left Behind

Other laws such as **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**, signed by former President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002 have had a dramatic impact on the governance of schools, individual classrooms, teachers and other educational professionals. The NCLB act was passed primarily as a result of the school reform reports of the 1990s concluding that our nation's educational system needed major reformation (Kochan & Herrington, 1992). Initially, NCLB requires all students in grades 3 through 8 take standardized achievement tests in math and reading every year. In 2007 a yearly standardized science test was added and now math, reading, and science achievement tests are required of all students grades 3 through 5, 6 through 9, and 10 through 12.

NCLB also requires reporting on **adequate yearly progress (AYP)** meaning that math, reading and science achievement test scores will determine if schools are making adequate progress. In addition, NCLB requires schools to

In February of 2012, ten states will not be required to pursue school reforms associated with "No Child Left Behind". At least 28 more states are expected to follow (discussed in chapter 5).

from low-income families, racial and ethnic minority students, and non-English speaking students.

## Race to the Top

More recently, as part of the ‘American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, President Barack Obama, announced on July 24, 2009 a new education initiative, **Race to the Top (R2T, RTTP)**. R2T is a \$4.35 billion U. S. Department of Education program designed to address the needs of teacher and school effectiveness and student learning. The R2T program is designed to facilitate reforms in state and local districts (K through 12), through a state competition for funding (R2T Website: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>). RT2 is an attempt to persuade states to adopt ‘common standards’ in assessing and measuring student achievement. These common standards were developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The criteria for the state funding competition are outlined in Table 1.2.

**TABLE 1.2**

### Criteria for R2T State Funding

#### **Great Teachers and Leaders (138 points)**

In this section states are required to provide plans for improving teacher and principal effectiveness, ensuring equitable distribution of **effective** teachers and principals, and providing alternatives and paths for success for aspiring teachers and principals. In addition, states must show that they support teachers and principals and plans to improve teacher and principal preparation programs within their state.

#### **State Success Factors (125 points).**

The State Success Factors requires states to explain their education agenda, how they plan to implement and sustain their proposed plans, and how they will demonstrate progress in raising student achievement scores.

#### **Standards and Assessments (70 points).**

In this section, states are required to relate plans for developing and adopting common standards for measuring student achievement and school progress, how they will support the transition to higher standards and assessments for students and teachers. In addition, the defining and the process of implementation of assessment measures are required.

#### **General Selection Criteria (55 points)**

The General Selection Criteria requires states to define how they will maintain conditions for high-performing schools, including charter schools, and how they will make education a high funding priority.



**TABLE 1.2 (CONTINUED)****Criteria for R2T State Funding****Data Systems to Measure and Support Instruction (47 points)**

Data Systems to Measure and Support Instruction requires states to define how they will or are currently implementing a common statewide longitudinal data system and how they will access and use data collected to improve instruction.

State prioritization of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), worth another 15 points, was added to the above points, for a possible total of 500 points.

**Improving the Lowest Achieving Schools (50 points)**

In this section states must define how they will improve student achievement, faculty and administrative performance in their lowest-achieving schools and other positive interventions will be undertaken in the lowest achieving schools.

**Summary**

In March, 2010 the first state R2T winners and awards were announced. The states were: District of Columbia, \$75 million; Delaware, \$100 million; Florida, \$700 million; Georgia, \$400 million; Hawaii, \$75 million; Maryland, \$250 million; Massachusetts, \$250 million; New York, \$700 million; North Carolina, \$400 million; Rhode Island, \$75 million; and Tennessee, \$500 million.

(Race to the Top Program Executive Summary, <http://www2.ed.gov/govprograms/racetothetop/index.html>).

**Programs for International Student Assessment (PISA)**

Although it is too early to determine the success or failure of NCLB and R2T, the latest global rankings of high school achievement test scores by **PISA** (Program for International Student Assessment) demonstrate the challenges faced by our nation's educational system. PISA is an international evaluation of 15-year-old student achievement in reading, math, and science. The program began in 2000 and is sponsored by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Tests are administered every three years and the 2009 results were reported in 2010. Table 1.3 shows the ranking of U.S. students.

**TABLE 1.3****PISA - U. S. Student Rankings**

Year	Math	Reading	Science
2003	22 <sup>nd</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup>
2006	35 <sup>th</sup>	*	34 <sup>th</sup>
2009	31 <sup>st</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	23 <sup>rd</sup>
* (not available)			

Although there is yet little research evidence as causes of the differences among countries, it is interesting to note that among the 2009 international leaders: Shanghai, China; Finland; South Korea; and Hong Kong, China some common teaching trends emerge. These trends include disciplined students, highly qualified teachers, a well-defined curriculum, and prompt attention and treatment to learning problems. (Official PISA site data. (<http://pisa2009.acer.edu.au/multidim.php>) “Executive Summary” (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/12/46643496.pdf>)

Although the reforms, discussion, and debate on teacher effectiveness and student achievement continues, teachers still have considerable freedom and influence on their students. But as illustrated by Rosa’s Law, NCLB, R2T, state, and federal laws are significantly influencing the decisions teachers must make about their classrooms.

## **INTASC Standard 10** Leadership and collaboration

### **Social Responsibility and Teaching: A Teacher’s Contributions to Social Progress and the Global Community**

Interactions between teachers, students, and the school environment are critical to academic success; but how does the educational community affect social progress? What is the relationship of education and global progress? A primary goal of any educational endeavor should be the enhancement of human life. As teachers, we must concern ourselves with what happens to students once they complete their formal education. Do they have the skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to successfully engage in the “pursuit of happiness” and become productive citizens?

As suggested earlier in the chapter, poverty exists in every city, small town, and rural area in this country. Ironically, some of the areas of highest per-capita income have some of the worst pockets of poverty. Yet, because of the relatively high standard of living enjoyed by so many, American students often find it difficult to conceptualize the economic crises many nations of people continually face. For example, many American students are not aware of the famine that struck Africa in the mid-1980s and 1990s and in some areas continues today. Nor do many realize some countries have been at war for literally decades or that currently an entire African population is threatened by the AIDS virus.

Conditions of these magnitudes threaten the global community. Certainly, our school curricula cannot afford to ignore such information, and surely our schools must take some responsibility for helping future generations develop a responsibility toward troubled people of all nationalities.

As a teacher, strive to develop among students a sense of world and national citizenship. Make periodic group assignments and tasks requiring cooperation

as part of the lesson plans. Few classroom events could have a more profound impact on your students' respect for other nations than inviting someone from another country to visit your class. If you teach near a university, the international organization on campus can help identify foreign students who would be willing to meet with your class. These visits can enable your students to understand the social norms and values in other societies. Such international issues reflect the importance of the issues facing our national educational system.



## PROACTIVE TEACHING

With the national and international issues facing teachers in the classroom, how should they approach their chosen profession? This brings us to a major theme of this text: **proactive teaching**. In the simplest of terms, proactive teachers anticipate and prepare for classroom problems and situations *before* they occur. Helping teachers become proactive is a major focus of this text. Consider the situations and alternatives described in the following sections;

### CLASSROOM SITUATION

- You anticipate that several students in your classes will lag significantly behind their peers academically.
- You anticipate that some of your students will excel academically.
- You will be asked for your opinion on types of punishment for disciplinary action in your school.

### PROACTIVE ALTERNATIVES

- Have remedial materials prepared *prior* to the beginning of classes.
- Prepare for peer tutoring in advance by examining the past academic records of students to determine who could be tutors and who may need assistance.
- Have accelerated materials and projects prepared prior to the beginning of classes to challenge academically advanced students.
- Prepare “team” oriented material that provides the opportunity for students to work together.
- Prepare in advance the disciplinary measures you will use in your classroom and communicate these measures to students at the beginning of the school year.

- Some students will seem to take delight in disrupting your class, and the remainder of the class might reinforce their behavior.
- You will most likely encounter one or all of the following:
  - a. You will suspect that one of your students is a victim of abuse.
  - b. A senior-high female student will confide in you that she is pregnant.
  - c. You will become aware that one of your students has a drug problem.
- Familiarize yourself with school rules concerning discipline.
- Through the study of Chapter 6, discover alternatives and ramifications of punishment.
- Have written class rules prepared to discuss with your students the first day of class, (Chapters 6 and 12).
- The rules should stipulate very specifically:
  - a. appropriate academic and social student behavior; and
  - b. inappropriate academic and social student behavior; and the consequences of both types of behavior.
- Familiarize yourself with your school's counseling and referral services.
- Discuss with a counselor, school psychologists, and/or administrator of your school the legal responsibilities of teachers concerning child abuse, pregnancy, and drugs.

The phrase “proactive teacher” is defined as the ability of teachers to anticipate problems and opportunities and therefore make quality decisions, both personal and professional, that will promote students’ social and academic success.

As our classroom situations suggest, the decisions you will be making as a teacher will be varied and complex. Therefore, the process you use to make decisions is extremely important. Reactive teachers can be problem solvers; proactive teachers are also problem solvers, but in addition they make decisions that *shape* their classroom environment. They prepare themselves, their students, and the classroom environment for student success. They attempt to maximize the likelihood of students’ social and academic success by *acting on* the classroom environment. Additionally, they possess an abundance of efficacy; they believe they and their students will succeed.



## A VIEW FROM THE FIELD



### PROFILE

**D**r. Daphne D. Johnson (Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Individual Differences from the University of Houston—University Park) is Chair of Curriculum and Instruction at Sam Houston State University where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in human growth and development, instructional strategies, and classroom management.

Dr. Johnson's research interests include critical thinking and effective strategies for online instruction. She has been published in *Instructional Leader*, *Interactive Technology and Smart Education*, *New Teacher Advocate*, *TechEdge*, *Learning and Leading with Technology*, *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, and *American Secondary Education Journal*. Dr. Johnson is co-editor of the journal *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*.

Dr. Johnson has written grants designed to increase the retention of students to graduation; and more recently summer study for students 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades, focusing on logic and critical thinking skills.

#### **QUESTION: What advice would you give to beginning teachers?**

Over Planning! It is important to critically consider their room arrangement, rules and procedures, discipline plan, family communication plan, and the diverse needs of the learners who will occupy their classrooms. The more planning completed before the school year

begins, the more successful the teacher will be.

Planning procedures, I believe, is the most important part of over planning. Procedures are the backbone of a well-run classroom. When procedures are taught, practiced, and enforced, they become invisible. Teachers should plan how students will enter the classroom, where they turn in homework, get missed work when they are absent, and get the teacher's attention, along with hundreds of other classroom procedures.

#### **QUESTION: How can teachers use educational psychology to instill in students “the joy of learning”?**

Children are born with an innate curiosity and love of learning. Teachers who know this and draw upon this knowledge can teach a child almost anything. Learning should be fun! Yes, it is difficult sometimes but difficult does not have to mean boring.

Educational Psychology offers so much information about our brains, how we learn and process information at all ages, and provides us ideas on how to motivate all types of children. Over the last 10 years, I have asked pre-service teachers about their favorite learning experience in school. In that time, not one pre-service teacher ever said her favorite experience was a worksheet. Think about it . . . what was your favorite learning experience in school?

Most responses are group activities where the learners were required to use their curiosity and love of learning to solve, create, or analyze something. Most responses were hands-on activities that involved some degree

of research, and required discussion, collaboration and compromise. Learning to plan these types of experiences for your students begins with getting a firm grasp on the research base offered in Educational Psychology. ■

We have explored several national issues challenging future teachers. Now, let's examine how the research findings of educational psychologists and technology can be applied to improve teaching.

## APPLYING EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH IN THE CLASSROOM

As we have discussed, many social factors (nationally and internationally) will influence the classroom environment in the twenty-first century. Does the past and contemporary research in educational psychology have implications for addressing the student/teacher educational issues we have discussed in this chapter? The activities discussed in Table 1.1 indicate contemporary research in educational psychology offers alternatives to teachers facing such issues. Obviously, many other factors will influence the school environment in the coming years, such as technology, the anticipated teacher shortage, and an unpredictable economy, just to name a few. The variables determining the effectiveness of teaching methodologies, how students learn, how best to interact with students, their families and your peers are critical yet, exceedingly complex. The research educational psychologists have undertaken to answer such questions has been difficult and painstaking. However, the knowledge gleaned over the years, through research, can assist you tremendously as you strive to become an effective teacher.

Traditionally, educators have addressed research by focusing on the view that only empirical, quantitative research was acceptable. However, **qualitative research**, such as **case studies** and journal keeping, can have unique potential for addressing some classroom issues. Qualitative research allows the study of how people describe events and defined experiences. In recent years, qualitative research methods have made an increasing impact in education and especially in special education (Ferguson & Halle, 1995). We will be offering case studies throughout the text.

As a future teacher, you face a variety of challenges: You will be part motivator, counselor, negotiator, disciplinarian, and, yes, teacher. The study of educational psychology will be an important part of your preparation for the diverse role you will have as teacher in one the most complex of all occupations (Silva, 2010).

Knowledge of research generated by educational psychologists is essential for those preparing to be teachers.

## YOUR GOALS AND EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Perhaps the most important issue pertaining to a career in education is individual goals, namely yours. Enumerating your goals might offer some contrast to the political, social, and economic goals for education advocated by groups and other individuals. You may have a goal of becoming a millionaire (good luck!), or you may have a goal of pursuing a graduate degree in night school as you pursue your career teaching elementary school (many have done this, so good luck on this one also). Goals that include students enjoying your classes, maximizing student achievement, and establishing good rapport with your students and fellow teachers are goals we hope you will embellish.

### A Bit of Advice

What is the best advice an educational psychologist can give you as a prospective teacher? Candidly that's a tough question but let's begin with you as a human being. One of the first lessons you will learn when you begin your career as a teacher is that you are very human. After you have been in the classroom for a few months or less, you will find that how your students' respond to you as a teacher will have a dramatic personal impact on you both inside and outside the classroom. If you are having a difficult time in the classroom; your students are not responding in class, your students are not learning, your classes are behaviorally out of control, or you don't get along with your peer teachers—such career problems will affect you negatively inside and outside the classroom. Such problems can affect your relationships with your family and your friends and can impact your feelings about yourself. Conversely, if you are successful as a teacher, you enjoy teaching, your students like you and you them, your students learn, and you get along with your peers. The chances are very good such career success will affect you positively inside and outside the classroom. This includes your relationships with your family, your friends, and how you feel about yourself.



## TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

As you consider the applications of technology to the subject material in each chapter, we suggest that you avail yourself of the vast amount of information and advice available on the Internet.

We suggest that you begin with the U.S. Department of Education homepage (<http://www.ed.gov>). This homepage offers information and houses the “National Center for Education Statistics,” which publishes a document that contains a comprehensive review of education statistics publications, including the “Conditions of Education.” This annual report includes information on enrollment rates, dropout rates, and trends in academic achievement and education spending.

“Elementary and Secondary Statistics at a Glance” (<http://edreform.com/pubs/edstats.htm>) offers a useful snapshot of public education in America. Do you want to compare your school or district with the national average? This is the place to come. U.S. information on schools, enrollment, teachers, student-teacher ratios, expenditures, salaries and wages, and overall funding is readily available.

An excellent source of educational publications can be found at [www.edweek.com](http://www.edweek.com).

Other resources include the American Psychological Association, or APA (<http://www.apa.org>) and the National Association for School Psychologists, or NASP. (<http://nasp.web.org>).

In the forthcoming Technology in the Classroom sections, we will provide web addresses for additional information that relates to subject material covered in the chapter. ■







## RECAP OF MAJOR IDEAS

1. Educational psychology in the school environment is the study of applying the methods and theories of Psychology to student development, behavior, cognition and learning processes.
2. A growing percentage of our nation's children face obstacles inhibiting their becoming successful learners. Effective teachers find ways to help these 'at-risk' students succeed.
3. Effective proactive teachers have specific qualities which can be defined and learned.
4. Teachers have a responsibility to educate students, regardless of their social, economic, or physical limitations.
5. The environments of the school and classroom significantly impact student learning and socialization.
6. The increasing complexity of our national educational issues accentuates teachers' needs for effective teaching methodologies and classroom skills and an understanding of educational psychology research findings applicable to such issues.

### Characteristics of Effective Schools

- Instruction is emphasized.
- Curriculum is planned and purposeful.
- The school day is devoted to academic activities.
- Homework is given.
- Systematic evaluation procedures are used.
- High achievement is expected and recognized.
- Principals provide instructional leadership.
- Teachers effectively use instructional time.
- The climate is safe and orderly.
- Principals and teachers have a sense of responsibility to students.
- Discipline procedures are fair and consistent and punishment is infrequent. (Armstrong, Henson, & Savage, 2009)

### Characteristics of Well-Managed and Organized Classrooms

- Classroom rules are put into effect the first day of class.
- Classroom rules are communicated to students.

- Expectations are made clear to students.
- Teachers monitor student behavior.
- Teachers consistently, systematically, and quickly follow through on rules.
- Students know they must work on academic activities.
- Students are accountable for their work.
- Academic activities run smoothly with brief transition times.
- Teachers spend little time on misconduct.
- Instructions are clear.
- Lessons are well organized. (Armstrong et al., 1989)

## FURTHER APPLICATIONS

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1. *Teaching minority students.* The number of minority students in American classrooms is growing at an unprecedented rate. Unfortunately, some teachers are not prepared for the diversity these students bring to the classroom. Those teachers who are insightful and prepared can use this unique opportunity for their students and themselves to learn more about the many cultures that make up our population.

Examine your own prejudices. How long has it been since you have chosen to collaborate on a project with a member of another culture? Can students be taught to better understand the behaviors of other ethnic and racial groups? Do you agree there are just as many differences among individuals within groups as there are between groups?

Prepare a set of three activities that you can use in a multicultural class to help your students learn to understand and appreciate members of other ethnic and racial groups. Justify your selection of these activities by basing them on knowledge about multiculturalism that you have gotten from this chapter and other sources.

2. *Teaching at-risk children.* Increased poverty, changes in work patterns, and changes in the family structure are among the many concerns in our society that have made the attainment of a good formal education difficult for many American children. The number of at-risk students is rapidly increasing. As a future teacher, you will need to prepare yourself to identify these children and provide ways of helping them succeed.

Make a list of several categories of at-risk students. For each category, briefly describe the effects these conditions may have on young people in the classroom. List three recommendations a teacher could make to the parents of at-risk students.

3. *Using teacher effectiveness research.* Think back to your elementary or secondary school days. Can you recall a teacher or teachers as being your favorite?
  - a. How would you describe this teacher? Make a list of adjectives that come to mind.
  - b. Examine your list. How many of these entries involve feelings, emotions, or values?
  - c. How serious was this teacher about achievement? Was this a teacher who held high expectations for students?
  - d. List four ways you can use the methodologies of this teacher in your career.

What will be the characteristics of your teaching and your classroom? Will they reflect the changes that are predicted for future classroom environments?

4. *Addressing contemporary educational issues.* Examine the issues raised in the National Educational Issues section. What issues do you believe should be addressed in the classroom and how should this be done?

## KEY TERMS

school reform legislation  
 effective teachers  
 educational psychology  
 knowledge base  
 proximity control  
 educationally at-risk  
 effective schools  
 racial prejudice  
 sex discrimination

acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)  
 Rosa's Law  
 No Child Left Behind  
 Race to the Top  
 proactive alternatives  
 reactive teachers  
 proactive teachers  
 efficacy

## LOOKING AHEAD

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Chapter 1 set forth a major goal for this text: To help prospective teachers facilitate the academic and social achievement of their future students. These responsibilities require an understanding of student developmental processes. Over the years, educational psychologists have collected valuable information concerning these processes, forming theories to explain their relationships. Paramount among these are theories of cognitive and language development. Chapter 2 examines these developmental theories. ■

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