

Ch. 1

Learning, Teaching & Educational Psychology

1. Many professional educators consider lowering class size to be a key factor in improving the quality of education. However educational psychologists, argue that empirical studies show little evidence to support the idea that class size (in and of itself) contributes much to student learning. What is your position on this issue? What is the basis for your position? If a colleague disagreed with you, how would you respond?
2. Give examples of and discuss circumstances within the teaching profession when such human characteristics as enthusiasm, caution, uncertainty, and absolute assurance can be helpful and/or potentially harmful.
3. The reflective teacher sets aside regular blocks of time to think about teaching activities and make new plans. Most teachers complain about insufficient time to reflect and plan. What are some of the ways that you plan to help yourself do so? What might you suggest to your school administrators that would help you make more time available to do so?

Ch. 2

Cognitive Development and Language

1. Why is it important for teachers at the elementary level to understand the developmental characteristics of older students in middle school and high school? Conversely, why is it important for secondary teachers to be familiar with the developmental characteristics of elementary children?
2. While many children between ages eleven and twelve are beginning the transition from concrete operational thought to more formal or abstract capabilities, not all children have made or will make the transition. How would you as teachers begin to assess whether your students were concrete or formal operators? Once you had made a determination, would you instruct these students any differently? If so, how?
3. Consider the following propositions: (a) Not all students become formal operators; (b) Not all students can become formal operators. On the basis of your understanding of Piagetian theory, respond to each proposition.

Ch. 3

The Self, Social, and Moral Development

1. The dropout problem, especially in urban centers throughout the U.S., is severe. Utilizing Erikson's theory of personality development and focusing particularly on those stages related to school age, how would you relate the school dropout problem to personality development theory? How would you utilize this knowledge to prevent students from withdrawing from school?
2. Consider your own personal experience as a middle school and high school student. How have the issues of personal identity, expectations of others in terms of occupational choice, and expected gender-role behavior influence your personal attitudes toward learning, occupational interests and choices, and long-term planning? As a teacher, how would you use your own experiences along with your current knowledge of personality and cognitive development to advise students struggling with identity conflicts?
3. In the United States today, there is considerable debate over personalities, morals, values, separation of church and state, patriotism, and a host of related topics. Given Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories regarding the development of moral reasoning, what do you perceive your role is with regard to the moral development of children, especially in the context of the public school?

Ch. 4

Learner Differences and Learning Needs

1. This chapter is about accommodating student variability. Consider and discuss factors and human characteristics other than ability and achievement that need to be considered in grouping students for the purpose of instruction.
2. Many organizations that represent minority groups contend that standardized intelligence tests are inherently discriminatory. As a teacher, how would you react to a charge of test bias and discrimination in grouping practices? What steps would you take to minimize bias?
3. The practice of categorizing or labeling children is often decried as stigmatizing and harmful to children, yet proponents of the practice argue that it has positive consequences. Discuss both the positive and negative consequences in terms of their impact on the students and the regular classroom teacher. As a prospective teacher, discuss what the following labels tell you about a person and how you may react if one or more of these labels are applied to you or your student:
 - Sheena is a slow learner.
 - John is moderately mentally retarded.
 - Mildred is a classic underachiever.
 - Alex is going to be mainstreamed even though he is visually impaired.
 - Mary must see a learning disabilities teacher each day for one hour.
4. Gardner's view of intelligence might be turned on its head: rather than using it to devise alternative ways to teach subject matter, learners might argue that their intelligences are not the ones being measured by the system. How would one argue against such a position?
5. Many of the concerns expressed about intelligence might equally apply to so-called learning styles. What are the potential limitations associated with the use of information on individual learning styles?

Ch. 5

Culture and Diversity

1. Research shows that while great gains have been made in gender equity, children are exposed to certain types of gender stereotyping from the early years on. What are some examples you can think of? What are some of the sources from which such attitudes are formed? What action, if any, might teachers take to address them?
2. Assume you are encountering a new class of students, how do you intend to familiarize yourself with the ethnic and cultural differences you need to be aware of in teaching these students?
3. Given the subject or grade level you intend to teach, what can you do within your classroom to teach greater understanding of and appreciation for all forms of human diversity?

Ch. 6

Behavioral Views of Learning

1. There are those who argue that by rewarding student performance, especially with tangible items such as candy, privileges, or tokens, teachers are actually minimizing student learning by reducing self-initiative. As teachers or prospective teachers, discuss how you would respond to such criticism.
2. Everyone has heard the old axiom: To spare the rod is to spoil the child. On the basis of personal experience and your reading of this chapter, discuss the role that punishment should play in the instructional process. (While discussing this issue, keep in mind the following: corporal punishment remains in effect in many school districts, punishment is considered by many to be an effective means of controlling inappropriate behavior, and adults found guilty of child abuse often have been abused as children.)
3. As a teacher, you have decided to publicly praise, thank, and reward examples of appropriate behaviors in your classroom while ignoring mis-behavior. What are the strengths and limitations of this approach? Give several examples of the types of incidents to which this strategy might be applied appropriately. Discuss how a procedure of this type may be an example of modeling, direct reinforcement, and vicarious conditioning.

Ch. 7

Cognitive Views of Learning

1. As a prospective teacher, discuss and give examples of how you might develop instructional practices and work with students to strengthen the *control processes of attention, rehearsal* (maintenance and elaborative), and *retrieval skills* to assist your students to develop improved memory processes.
2. A key component of strategic learning is metacognitive skills, i.e. the ability to continuously monitor, evaluate, and alter the efficiency and effectiveness of our own learning practices. As students, discuss what you look for and what you do to assess the effectiveness of your own learning (ex. are you frequently surprised with your test results?). Also discuss what you believe you can do to improve your own learning skills. As teachers-to-be, discuss how you would encourage your students to develop improved metacognitive strategies when you begin to teach.
3. Over the years, mnemonic strategies have been demonstrated to be differentially effective for certain types of memory tasks. As a student and prospective teacher, discuss specific situations where you would use particular mnemonics. Discuss how your knowledge of how to use these strategies can assist the students whom you will eventually teach.

Ch. 8 Complex Cognitive Processes

1. Meaning or meaningfulness are key ingredients for learning in general and problem solving in particular. From the perspective of a student, discuss the importance of meaning and meaningfulness in reference to your own learning. From a teacher's perspective, why should you and how can you make learning meaningful for your students?
2. Metacognitive knowledge (or personal self-knowledge concerning how and why we think and learn) appears to be a key factor in determining both the quality and the quantity of individual human learning. From the points of view of a student or a teacher, discuss the key features of metacognition and how schools can assist students to become more metacognitively aware.
3. Several effective study techniques have been consistently taught to secondary students (ex. you might have been taught the PQ4R method of studying or a note taking technique in which they divided the notebook paper into two columns and then took class notes in the right-hand column and later entered summary or priority information in the left-hand column). Have you continued to use the techniques? If you quit, explain why? One problem with a great number of study tactics is that they emphasize elaboration when the criterion tasks seem to emphasize factual recall. Has this been your experience?

Ch. 10 Motivation in Learning and Teaching

1. Each view of motivation can be useful in explaining particular aspects of student behavior. Explain the connection you see between the following motivational views and behaviors.

- Behavioral View:** * Why students may work on assignments that they prefer not to do
 * Why a student may want to please certain teachers but not others
- Cognitive View:** * Why students may continue to seek an answer to a problem even though they have failed to experience early reinforcement
 * Why two students may experience the same level of success in a subject, but display different levels of motivation to learn more about it
- Humanistic View:** * Students who feel loved, accepted, and admired are *more* likely to be interested in learning than other students
 * Why solving one problem may stimulate a student to try to solve other more challenging problems
- Social Cognitive View:** * Why low-achieving children may not be encouraged by success
 * Why those with low aspirations may set impossible goals for themselves

2. The world of work is frequently competitive; those who succeed are rewarded and those who fail are penalized. Yet there are educators who advocate a classroom atmosphere that emphasizes a relaxed, noncompetitive environment in which those who fail are encouraged and helped to overcome limitations. Discuss how these conflicting viewpoints can be resolved. Are there aspects of academic work that should be competitive and others that should not? Anxiety generally interferes with learning and performance. Explain the reasons for this effect and suggest ways in which teachers can help high-anxiety students to achieve better grades.
3. What are the potential dangers associated with the excessive use of rewards? How about those associated with excessive use of punishment. How can you as a teacher minimize these dangers?
4. How would you classify a student's attribution if he claimed he did poorly in chemistry because the subject did not interest him? Suggest and briefly describe some strategies that teachers might use to help failure-avoiding students become more mastery-oriented.

Ch. 12

Creating Learning Environments

1. On the basis of your own experience as a student, outline and discuss teacher characteristics that, in your opinion, contribute to a well-managed classroom and learning environment. Conversely, discuss the teacher characteristics that in your estimation contribute to a poorly managed teaching and learning environment. Finally, what characteristics do you believe you possess that may contribute to a well-managed learning environment?
2. All teachers, especially new teachers, will have to handle a variety of behavioral and disciplinary problems (e.g., name calling, theft, pushing, fighting, cheating). Consider for a moment the types of disciplinary problems that you may have to confront and discuss how you intend to (a) anticipate the problem and thus reduce its intensity, and (b) intervene when problems do arise.
3. In searching for a school that you would like to work in, discuss what you would look for that may lead you to believe that the environment is essentially non-violent.

Ch. 14

Classroom Assessment, Grading, and Standardized Testing

1. Standardized tests are used to assess how children vary in achievement and aptitude. Discuss and provide examples of how standardized achievement and aptitude test results can be positively used for program development. Also discuss how tests that reflect the differences among children can be negatively employed.
2. Discuss how you as a teacher can determine whether a test is reliable and valid. Why is this information important?
3. You have just received the results from a recent series of standardized tests involving your class. For each student the raw scores for each test have been translated into grade equivalent scores, percentile rank, and two standard scores (z scores and T scores). A number of parents have asked about the results. Discuss which of these scores is most appropriate for reporting test results to parents. Other than the test grade, what should you as a teacher be sure to discuss with parents who request test results.
4. Various types of tests serve different purposes. Discuss the purposes served by norm-referenced tests as compared to criterion-referenced tests. Identify situations where each would be appropriate. Discuss which of the two systems you prefer and why. In the case of norm-referenced grading, how do you select the norm group? In the case of criterion-referenced grading, how do you decide on differing levels of proficiency (criteria)?