

The history of education in the United States covers many different methodologies. Beginning with the one-room school houses of the settlers, to the establishment of our modern school system, to the progressive era to the present day, which seems to unify the past ideals of education and its future plans. These varying ideas seem to have been in battle with each other throughout our nation's short educational history. However, the ebbs and flows of educational thought are beginning to lay the foundation for our current and developing system to determine our nation's educational identity in a time that is rich with global competition.

A trailblazing theorist, Rousseau postulated that humans were born inherently good and that specifically curated education could maintain that goodness. It is because of the social constraints and expectations of high society that we begin to lose our sensibility. His belief rallied around the ideal that children could remain "good" by controlling his or her educational environment and limiting social corruption. He was in favor of stretching out education well into adulthood. Early education should be spent on allowing the children to learn their own boundaries and create their own opinions and it is not until their teens that children should obtain a traditional education. The job of the educator was to observe and identify the child's stage and take advantage of individualized learning opportunities.

Much Like Rousseau, Dewey believed strongly in the need to pay attention and to meet the child where they are. The belief that the nature of a child centered on the idea that children will learn best in a social setting with their community as support. He believed in the importance of using experiences to guide and support education, not to force it. Dewey soon became the face of the progressive educational movement. As stated in his writing, *My Pedagogic Creed*, Dewey believed that education should be small and personal and should not focus on educating a child for a future, which we know not, but for living in the present. Education should be organic and based out of experiences and that the teacher' position is to simply attend to the child's curiosity. Dewey's foundation was the progressive ideal that children learn best by doing. In his writing, *The Child and the Curriculum*, Dewey explained his reasoning by stating, "The child lives in a somewhat narrow world of personal contacts. Things hardly come within his experience unless they touch...his own being or that of his family or friends. His world is of persons with their personal interests, rather than a realm of facts and laws." While there are still those who believe Dewey's system has value, there are a few theorists who found flaws in his philosophies.

As written in E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s work, *Traditional Education is Progressive*; he argues that it is in fact traditional education that helps bridge the gap between social classes. His research outlines that with the institution of progressive education in America, there was an abrupt stop to the previously shrinking academic gap. Hirsch argues that while progressives and traditionalists agree that instruction should show how things fit together, there is still importance in learning the basic elements of different subjects. In addition, he contends that progressives may feel as though classic subjects are dull and irrelevant, but if put into the hands of an effective teacher, any subject can seem interesting.

In conclusion, the debate between progressive and traditional education still runs hot. Each camp believes their belief is best. Traditional theorists like E.D. Hirsch point out the progressive school of thought does not in fact close the gap between social classes. However, proponents of social-emotional education, like Nel Noddings, identify that education is at its best when

pedagogical activity is blended with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Although these theorists seem to be at odds, the ultimate goal of anyone in education should be to help students become valuable and positive members of our community.