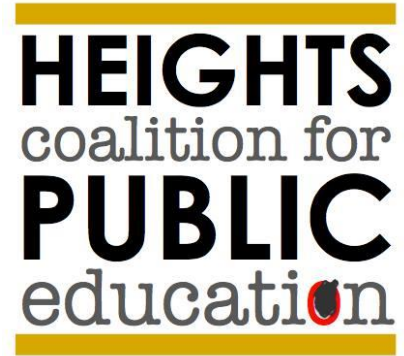


INSTRUCTIONS for Break Activity

Compare some of the “I believe” statements from education philosopher John Dewey’s 1897 “Pedagogic Creed” with many of the practices we observe today in our educational culture driven by high stakes accountability and “corporate” school reform.

Several of the “I believe” statements are printed on the back of this sheet. They have also been posted around the walls. There is space on the sheets around the walls for you to note which of today’s educational practices you think Dewey’s belief statement endorses and which Dewey would reject.



Here are merely some of today’s educational practices Dewey’s statements might speak to. You are of course welcome to name others:

- no-excuses discipline practices in schools like Eva Moskowitz’s Success Academy Charter Schools
- large classes
- schools driven by high-stakes standardized tests
- schools whose mission is defined as making students college- and career-ready
- education emphasizing test-prep
- so-called “personalized learning” on computers
- schools that try to motivate children through fear of failing a test
- school choice aimed at creating schools that meet students’ individual needs
- preschools that emphasize letter recognition and early reading
- national standards like the Common Core as the focus of schools and annual tests

Statements from John Dewey's Pedagogic Creed of 1897

(They are also posted around the walls.)

“I believe that the school is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child ... to use his own powers for social ends.”

“I believe that much of present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life. It conceives the school as a place where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed. The value of these is conceived as lying largely in the remote future... they are mere preparation.”

“I believe that education... is a process of living and not a preparation for future living.”

“I believe that moral education centres about this conception of the school as a mode of social life, that the best and deepest moral training is precisely that which one gets through having to enter into proper relations with others in a unity of work and thought.”

“I believe that under existing conditions far too much of the stimulus and control proceeds from the teacher... The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences.”

“I believe that we violate the child's nature and render difficult the best ethical results, by introducing the child too abruptly to a number of special studies, of reading, writing, geography ... I believe, therefore, that the true centre of correlation of the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child's own social activities.

I believe that interests are the signs and symptoms of growing power. I believe that they represent dawning capacities. Accordingly the constant and careful observation of interests is of the utmost importance for the educator. I believe that these interests are to be observed as showing the state of development which the child has reached... I believe that only through the continual and sympathetic observation of childhood's interests can the adult enter into the child's life and see what it is ready for, and upon what material it could work most readily and fruitfully.

I believe that education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness... I believe that in the ideal school we have the reconciliation of the individualistic and the institutional ideals.