

A low-angle photograph looking up at a geodesic dome structure made of dark metal poles. Five children are climbing or standing on the poles. At the top, a boy in a blue and red striped shirt and jeans is reaching up. To his left, a girl in a blue shirt and white shorts is holding onto a pole. Below her, a boy in a red and white striped shirt is hanging upside down. To the right, a boy in a red shirt and plaid pants is sitting on a pole. At the bottom, a girl in a red and white striped shirt and grey pants is looking up. The background is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds.

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Theory into Practice

Robert E. Slavin

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Educational Psychology: Theory into Practice

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For Jacob and Benjamin, and their teachers.

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Educational Psychology



Preface

There are dozens of educational psychology texts available today, most of them quite good. Why did I write another?

I am an educational researcher. Every year, I see scores of classrooms at all levels and in every kind of community, and meet hundreds of dedicated teachers and administrators. I often talk with them about educational psychology. Most of them see educational psychology as a course they took once, with little direct application to their day-to-day activities. Yet I find teachers' receptivity to practical applications of educational psychology to be overwhelmingly positive. Teachers want to be more effective, and they demand of educational psychologists, "Give us the tools to do a better job!"

I wrote this book with one goal in mind: to give tomorrow's teachers both the intellectual grounding and the practical strategies needed to be effective as instructors. In my view, the most effective teachers are those who understand the problems that must be solved in classroom instruction, know the full range of solutions to those problems, and can relate the solutions to basic psychological principles. For example, every teacher must confront the problem that students in the same class may be quite different from one another in prior knowledge, skills, and learning rate. It is my hope that teachers who have read this book will not only understand the consequences of this problem, but will know how, when, and most importantly why they might use any one of several strategies for accommodating student heterogeneity, ranging from individualized instruction to mastery learning to computer-assisted instruction to various forms of ability grouping. To make conscious, informed choices, teachers must know the costs and benefits of each of these strategies. They must have specific guidelines for using each strategy effectively, as well as research on each.

It is my hope and expectation that students and teachers will use this book as a reference, as a bridge between the world of research on educational psychology and the practical world of the classroom. I will judge the book's success according to how many copies are kept as students enter the teaching profession.

Since my goal is to make this book useful to future teachers, I have tried to present concepts simply, clearly, and without jargon. I have tried to avoid stating principles without illustrating them with realistic classroom examples; the words "for example" or their equivalents must appear several hundred times throughout the book. I have tried to write the book in such

a way that the reader will almost hear children's voices and smell the lunch cooking in the school cafeteria.

On the other hand, I have not shortchanged the intellectual foundations of educational psychology. This book is written for future teachers, not for future educational psychologists, yet it contains as many up-to-date references and as much conceptual background as the most research-oriented texts. I believe that teachers must know the powerful principles of psychology as they apply to education. Stated in clear language with many examples, these principles are not difficult to grasp, but do have profound importance. Effective teaching does not consist of a bag of tricks, but requires that teachers be conscious of why students behave as they do and how the teacher's own behavior is likely to affect students' learning.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into five principal sections—Development, Learning, Instruction, Individual Differences, and Measurement and Evaluation. Each section has several chapters. Within each chapter is a discussion of important theories, with many examples of how these theories apply to classroom teaching.

This book emphasizes the intelligent use of theory and research to improve instruction. The Instruction section, though only one of the five sections, occupies about one-third of the total pages in the book, and the other chapters all contain references to the meaning of theories and research findings for practice. Whenever possible, the guides for practice in this book are specific programs or strategies that have been evaluated and found to be effective, not just suggestions for things to try. Surgeons are not just given an anatomy course, a scalpel, and some hints for practice; rather, they are given specific procedures that are known to work. This book takes a similar approach to teaching.

Features

The goal of giving teachers the tools they need to do their job better is addressed by this book's major feature, the **Theory into Practice** sections that are presented throughout the text. All chapters but the first have at least one Theory into Practice section and many have two, three, or four such sections. These sections present strategies for instructional activities ranging from planning courses to presenting lessons to adapting instruction to meet the needs of students with academic handicaps.

The book's **Teachers on Teaching** sections, presented in all chapters, also contribute to the goal of making this a practical, useful book. In these sections, over 75 teachers offer their ideas on topics such as how to reinforce the desirable behavior of students, how to help students transfer school learning to situations outside the classroom, and how to present instructional objectives to students.

Other features in *Educational Psychology: Theory into Practice* are designed to help the reader grasp the book's content. It is only fitting that a book that describes effective methods of teaching should itself put these principles to work. This book tries to do just that.

For example, research on how people learn suggests that students should be introduced to a topic before studying it in depth. Two features at the beginning of each chapter serve this purpose. They are

- A **chapter outline** that acquaints the reader with the organization and content of each chapter
- Chapter **learning objectives** that state what the reader should be able to do after reading the chapter

Features at the end of each chapter are designed to encourage readers to think about and remember the chapter's content. These features are

- A **summary** that recaps main points
- **Study questions** that focus on important facts and concepts
- **Suggested readings** that direct the student to important supplementary materials

In addition, within each chapter important **glossary terms** are printed in boldface type the first time they are used in a significant way. Definitions of each term are given in the margin of the page. An end-of-book glossary provides an additional reference tool for students and teachers, as do the book's name index, subject index, and list of references.

Supplements

Four supplements have been developed in conjunction with this text. They are

- The **study guide**, which includes chapter outlines, objectives, key terms, study questions, and essay and discussion questions. The guide was written by Steven M. Ross of Memphis State University.
- An **interactive study guide**, which allows students who have access to a computer to quiz themselves on material from each chapter.
- An **instructor's manual**, which includes chapter overviews and objectives, lecture outlines, activities, essay and discussion questions, and

other resources for teaching this course. This manual was written by Suzanne P. Waller of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

- A **test item file**, with 1,000 multiple-choice, true-false, and essay questions. These questions were written by Paul Kaplan of Suffolk Community College.

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The field of educational psychology is so large, and is growing so rapidly, that no one person can possibly know everything about it. For this reason, I have relied on other colleagues for draft material that provided background and references relating to specific topics outside my own areas of expertise. These colleagues and the parts of the book to which they contributed are: *Part One (Development)*—Jeffrey W. Fagen of St. John's University, Stacie G. Goffin of the University of Missouri–Kansas City, Gerald W. Green and Craig Jones of the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies, and Larry Shelton of the University of Vermont; *Part Two (Learning)*—William M. Zangwill, New York City, Ralph E. Reynolds of the University of Utah, and Thomas Andre of Iowa State University; *Part Four (Individual Differences)*—Ronald L. Taylor of Florida Atlantic University, Frances L. Clark of the University of Louisville, and Sandra B. Damico of the University of Florida; *Part Five (Measurement and Evaluation)*—Philip L. Smith of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and Thom B. Clark of the University of North Carolina. Douglas H. Clements, Kent State University, contributed information on the use of computers in education.

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Educational Psychology

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