


Teaching Today

An Introduction to Education 



David G. Armstrong

Kenneth T. Henson

Tom V. Savage

Fifth Edition

F i f t h

TEACHING TODAY

*An Introduction
to Education*



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Teaching Today: An Introduction to Education is a comprehensive treatment of education and teaching. It provides a solid grounding in the intellectual foundations of the field, results of research, and current issues. We have provided many opportunities for users of the book to reflect, analyze, and decide. We think the book will develop your decision-making skills. This is something we value. And we hope it is something you as future teachers will prize, as well. Good luck!

Previous editions of this text have been used successfully in undergraduate and graduate courses. We have designed the book for use in introduction to education classes, introduction to teaching classes, general education classes, foundations of education classes, issues in education classes, and problems in education classes. Some content has relevance for inservice work with teachers and as a valuable professional reference for the career educator.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

We believe teachers should design their own courses and not be bound by the order of presentations of chapters in their textbooks. We also feel that this is how instructors should use our book. We have organized the book in a way that makes sense to us, but we recognize that others will want to follow a different sequence of chapters, and we encourage them to do so. Chapters have been written so that each is freestanding, that no chapter is a prerequisite to understanding content introduced in another.

In preparing this text, we decided to organize content under four major headings. These headings establish a general context for the related chapters. We begin with a section titled "Trends and Realities." Chapter 1 introduces a selection of important issues facing educators today. Chapter 2 takes a more detailed

look at what teaching is like in today's schools. Management and discipline continue to be issues of great concern to newcomers to our profession. For this reason, we treat this issue early in the text, in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 focuses on patterns of instructional organization in the schools. We find that many beginning teachers have thought little about the many categories of employees in schools. Information about this issue and about patterns of school organization is treated in Chapter 5.

The second section, "Contexts for Teaching," is designed to provide prospective teachers with an understanding of some characteristics and constraints they will find in today's classroom. Chapter 6 develops themes related to the international roots of American education. Chapter 7 introduces some philosophical perspectives that are reflected in attitudes toward school programs. This chapter is designed to help newcomers understand that not all people they will encounter will define "good education" in the same way. Chapter 8 introduces issues associated with the important impact of groups to which learners belong on their values and attitudes toward teachers and schools. Finally, Chapter 9 highlights important technological changes in education, with particular references to the World Wide Web of the Internet as an information source.

The third section, "Today's Diverse Learners," describes the great diversity of young people in today's schools. Chapter 10 profiles the range of learners in the schools, with particular attention to characteristics of young people in different age groups. Chapter 11 provides detailed information about the changing demographic characteristics of the schools, particularly regarding the rapidly increasing numbers of learners from minority cultural and ethnic groups. This chapter also introduces issues associated with gender equity. We live in a particularly litigious time. The final chapter in this section, Chapter 12, focuses on important issues associated with legal rights and responsibilities of learners.

The fourth section, "Teachers and Their Work," includes chapters addressing issues having to do with various dimensions of teachers' professional lives. We are strongly committed to the view that teaching practices can be improved through careful research. Chapter 13 introduces key findings of leading teacher-effectiveness researchers. Chapter 14 promotes the importance of individual classroom teachers doing research of their own design in their own classrooms. Chapter 15 introduces information about important legal issues facing teachers, with special reference to key court cases. The final chapter, Chapter 16, introduces both general teachers' organizations and specialty teachers' organizations.

CHAPTER FEATURES

Each chapter in the fifth edition of *Teaching Today: An Introduction to Education* includes

- *bulleted objectives* to help focus attention on key chapter content
- *an introduction* to establish a clear context for the content to follow

- *critical incidents* to prompt reflective thinking about typical issues and situations that confront teachers every day
- *boxes, figures, or tables* that raise important issues for student comment and consideration or that introduce important supplementary information
- *key ideas in summary* to review critical aspects of chapter content succinctly and efficiently
- *review and discussion questions* to provide students with opportunities to check their own learning and extend their thinking powers
- *ideas for field experiences, projects, and enrichment* to suggest opportunities for extending and applying chapter content
- *references* to indicate to students where they might find some of the original materials consulted by the authors

NEW TO THIS EDITION

The fifth edition contains much new content, including

- a new chapter on “Teachers as Researchers”
- a new chapter titled “How Groups Affect Learners”
- greatly expanded coverage of technology, focusing particularly on uses of the World Wide Web of the Internet in public schools
- extensive coverage of the Goals 2000 initiative
- treatment of trends such as “systemic reform,” “school choice,” “charter schools,” “full service schools,” “magnet schools,” “voucher plans,” and “school-business partnerships”
- discussion of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
- expanded and updated coverage of issues related to multicultural (including gender equity) and bilingual education
- increased coverage of issues related to management and discipline
- comprehensive treatment of results of teacher-effectiveness research
- thorough discussion of legal issues affecting teachers and learners
- “critical incidents” in each chapter to promote reflective thinking on real issues teachers face
- extensive updating of content in all chapters

SUPPLEMENTS TO THE TEXT

Continuing the pattern established in previous editions of *Teaching Today: An Introduction to Education*, an instructor’s guide has been prepared. It has been completely revised for this edition and includes

- overviews of the chapter content
- alternative ideas for sequencing courses using this text

- suggested activities
- a collection of questions suitable for quizzes and tests, with accompanying keys

The test items are also available in a disk format configured for use in either Apple-based or DOS-based computers.

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Wags sometimes comment that the United States and the United Kingdom are divided by a common language. Similarly, we educators are “divided” by a profession that provides a forum for disputes as much as it gives us a set of common purposes. Our individual perspectives are wide-ranging, and the contexts within which we work are incredibly varied. This book aims to help you understand our profession’s diversity (including some raging disputes that now engage us) as well as the special “professional glue” that binds us together.

As you read this book and begin preparing for your career in education, we ask you to begin by “unlearning” some important lessons. These lessons or perspectives may be ones you don’t even know you have acquired. These are the comfortable “truths” of personal experience, particularly the personal experiences you have had as a learner in the schools.

Your recollection of what went on in schools you attended may be sound. We do not mean to challenge the accuracy of your understanding of your own school experiences. Though many people recall “slices of past life” that collectively are a misrepresentation of what really happened, we accept that you may be an exception. What we want you to do, though, is avoid generalizing from your own school experiences to schooling and education in general. In our years of working with prospective teachers, one of the biggest barriers we have had to overcome is the tendency of newcomers to expect the school environment where they will be working to be essentially the same as the one they remember from their own school years. Untrue. Erase that idea. *Expect* sharp and sometimes surprising differences.

Schools where you will do preservice field experience work, including student teaching, and the school where you will begin your teaching careers may have little in common with the mental picture you now have of the world of public education. Some of you may be comfortable with differences you experience. Others of you may be uncomfortable. We want to make a comment or two to some of you who may be distressed by what you encounter.

First of all, you need to understand that the diversity among schools today is probably greater than it has ever been. If conditions at a school where you initially find work do not please you, you may be able to find another one where patterns are more to your liking. Second, teachers today are expected to participate in shaping the environment of the school where they work. If conditions are not what you think they ought to be, you have an obligation to try to change them.

Though differences among schools today are profound, there are threads that draw together members of our profession. Most of us work in fairly large institutions that also employ other professionals. We are in a public service enterprise. People we work with have college degrees. We are committed to helping new generations of young people take their place in our society.

What kind of a person succeeds in teaching today? There is no definitive answer to this question. However, if schools today were in the habit of putting up signs to attract prospective employees, lots of them might read: "Wanted: Teachers Who Lead." If you are looking for an occupation that is sheltered from the frustrations of contemporary life, teaching is not for you. If you expect to avoid making major policy decisions and just want to be left alone to "work with the kids," teaching is not for you. If you expect to be through with your own learning and professional development once you qualify for a teaching certificate and obtain a job, teaching is not for you.

Teachers today are expected to be proactive leaders. Many are active in the political process, particularly in lobbying efforts designed to win support for legislation to improve public education. New school leadership approaches, often referred to as "site-based management," require teachers to participate in decisions about curricula, graduation requirements, attendance policies, budgets, and other issues that used to be the exclusive responsibility of school administrators. Teachers increasingly are doing research in their own classrooms directed at improving instruction. They are taking the lead in utilizing the incredible intellectual resources available on the World Wide Web of the Internet to provide better programs for students.

Teachers who lead expect challenges to their decisions. There is much debate today about what goes on in schools. Virtually anything a teacher decides to do may lead to a confrontation. So how do you prepare for this kind of a role? Nobody has all the answers to this question, but certainly you need to develop a solid grasp of academic subject matter and research results related to effective classroom practice. This kind of a data base provides you some intellectual legs to stand on. You should strive, too, to develop your written and oral communication skills. The power of your ideas, alone, will not carry the day. But if you are "good on your feet" and can speak your thoughts forcefully, and if you can write clear, logical responses to concerns, chances are that you will fare well in your role as a teacher-leader.

The "professional life space" of a teacher today may last as long as 45 years. This means that you will need to keep learning and adapting in response to changing conditions in the schools. Information we provide in this text is designed to provide you with an "effective initial launch" into the profession. We believe ideas you will find here will allow you to have a satisfying and successful beginning.

D.G.A.

K.T.H.

T.V.S.

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