



# The Progressive Education Movement: Is It Still a Factor in Today's Schools?

By William Hayes

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For more than one hundred years, the United States has been the scene of academic warfare between traditional and progressive educators. During most of our nation's history, many Americans have assumed that the primary purpose of school is to pass on to children the information and skills necessary to survive in our society. This traditional view accepts the fact that a teacher's task is to inform children as to what they should know. Officials at the state and local level determine the content of students' education, and it is the teacher's job to ensure that the content is taught. Even before the beginning of the twentieth century, John Dewey and others introduced a different model. They believed that students learn best 'by doing' not by being passive listeners. For progressive educators, the teacher's role was to be a facilitator of learning in classrooms where students' interest helped to provide appropriate developmental learning experience. This new approach to education has greatly affected our schools during the past century. More recently, we have seen the emergence in American education of four initiatives that have threatened the continued influence of progressive education. They include the 'back to basics movement,' mandated state curriculum standards, high-stakes testing, and school accountability. Despite these trends, there appears to be several factors that might lead one to conclude that progressive education is remaining a viable approach in the United States. This book considers these factors as well as past, present, and possible future of the progressive education movement.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

The author of nine other books, Hayes (Roberts Wesleyan College) provides an admirably clear account of the history of progressive education and its prospects in today's schools. The early chapters trace progressive education from its roots in Rousseau and Pestalozzi, through Dewey and into the first half of the twentieth century, and into more recent times by focusing on such legislation as *A Nation at Risk* and *No Child Left Behind*. Then the aim is to detail progressive tendencies in modern teacher education programs, choice movements, and gifted and talented education. Two final chapters describe progressive education today and assay the future of progressive education. The book clearly is intended for teacher education students, but it would also interest a general audience. Recommended. (*CHOICE*)

William Hayes... takes us on a journey through the history of progressive education from its inception up to the present-day dilemmas facing our society. In *The Progressive Education Movement* he explores the role of progressive education in many of the key movements and events in public schooling in the twentieth century. Hayes also challenges us to consider the future of progressive education in today's political and cultural climate. These are important and useful questions for educators, parents, and citizens of a democracy to seriously consider. (Peter W. Knapp, Ed. D., associate professor of education, Roberts Wesleyan College)

#### About the Author

William Hayes is associate professor of teacher education at Roberts Wesleyan College. During his forty-five years in education, he has worked as a high school teacher, department chairman, assistant principal, both a junior and senior high school principal, superintendent, college division chairman, and professor.

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