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### **Conflicting Ideas on the Nature of the Child**

The conflict of ideas in the readings focuses on the debate in education, whether students should be the center of teaching or if knowledge should be the center of education. Both approaches vary in their stance on the nature of the child and what s/he needs to be a successful learner. In the progressive education movement, the child is the center of education and participates in authentic learning in which the nature is to learn by experiences. In the idea of knowledge-based education the curriculum is the center of education and the nature of the child is to learn facts and information that will help her to be successful in school and life.

John Dewey's Laboratory School was a major influence in progressive education, because it challenged the traditional ideas. In his school, Dewey focused on authentic, hands-on, interactive learning as the best way to engage students. In the article, *Experiencing Education*, John Dewey believes school is the same as life, in which the nature of the child is to learn through experiences or relations, and to become part of a social group where they learn to interact like a community. Each student naturally possesses individual strengths and weakness and the teacher should focus on each individual. Dewey explains in *The Child and the Curriculum* that the nature of the child is to think of her individual social and personal interests, and that those interests make up the child. With these interests come inquiry and a search for knowledge, which fulfills Dewey's goal to spend more attention on the experiences and circumstances of the students.

E.D. Hirsch Jr. is a thinker believing education should be knowledge-based with explicit academic goals, and contain order and discipline. According to Hirsch's article, *Romancing the Child*, he believes that the progressive approach is not the best when teaching Reading and Mathematics. Hirsch explains that the methods of rote memorization are beneficial to students even if they are unnatural, and that explicit and analytical instruction is artificial but necessary to be successful in school. The article *Progressive and Traditional Education* by Diane Ravitch, describes Hirsch's belief that children have an innate curiosity about other cultures, dinosaurs, and other curricula that schools have taken out because students don't experience those subjects in daily life. The goal of traditionalists in education is to promote intellectual growth of children no matter their background, because they believe providing students with knowledge will advance them in life and prepare them to become independent thinkers.

No matter the stance educators take on the progressive or traditional debate, the fundamental goal of educators is to provide education that will benefit students to become successful. Both progressive and traditional education looks to the nature of the child and contain beneficial ideas that can be used. It is necessary to know children's strengths and build upon their experiences; yet it is also beneficial for students to learn facts and knowledge necessary for them to grow and become successful.