Rousseau: An Interesting Madman

Popular song lyrics often have a way of reflecting what many people think, but rarely articulate. Recently, a song with a catchy tune and lots of airtime verbalized a way of thinking about God that is quite popular. The song, *What God Said* by a group called the Uninvited begins with the lyrics, "I talked to God and God said 'Hey! I've got a lot of things to say; write it down this very day and spread the word in every way.'" This is a remarkably evangelistic idea in this day of absolute tolerance for other people's beliefs. However, this god who has revealed himself to the songwriter doesn't expect much from the listener. According to the first verse we are to floss between each meal, drive with both hands on the wheel, and not be too sexually aggressive on the first date. In the second verse god wants us to ride bikes more, feed the birds, and clean up after our pets.

The third verse gets a little more interesting. God supposedly reveals that humans killed his only son and that his creation is undone, but that he can't help everyone. These obvious references to the incarnation of Christ and the Fall of Adam set up the listener for the solution to mankind's situation which, according to the song, is to "start with the basics—just be nice and see if that makes things all right." The chorus drives home this theology by repeating often that "I talked to God and God said nothing special, I talked to God and God said nothing that we shouldn't already know, shouldn't already know."

This idea, namely that any revelation from God would consist primarily of common sense notions, is a product of the Enlightenment and found an extraordinary voice in the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau argued that all one needs to know about God has been revealed in nature or in

one's own conscience. Rousseau is often called the father of the French revolution, a movement that exalted the worship of reason and attempted to purge the clergy and Christianity from French culture. Although Rousseau wasn't around for the bloodshed of the revolution itself, his idea of a natural theology helped to provide a framework for rejecting special revelation and the organized church.

Few people in history have caused such a wide spectrum of responses to their ideas. At his death, Rousseau's burial site became a place of pilgrimage. George Sand referred to him as "Saint Rousseau," Shelly called him a "sublime genius," and Schiller, a "Christ-like soul for whom only Heaven's angels are fit company."{1} However, others had a different perspective. His one and only true love, Sophie d'Houdetot, referred to him as an "interesting madman." Diderot, a long time acquaintance, summed him up as "deceitful, vain as Satan, ungrateful, cruel, hypocritical and full of malice."{2} In addition to anything else that might be said about Rousseau, he was at least an expert at being a celebrity. He was a masterful self-promoter who knew how to violate public norms just enough to stay in the public eye.

Interestingly enough, Rousseau's ideas have actually had greater and longer impact outside of France. Two centuries later, his natural theology plays a significant role in determining our society's view of human nature as well as how we educate our children. Thus it is important to consider the thoughts of Rousseau and see how they impact our culture today, especially in the realm of education.

Rousseau's Natural Theology

To begin our examination of the thoughts of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his impact on our view of human nature and education, we will turn our attention to the foundational thoughts of his natural theology.

Rousseau often claims in his writings that all he seeks is the truth, and he is very confident that he knows it when he sees it. Being a child of the Enlightenment, Rousseau begins with the Cartesian assumption that he exists and that the universe is real. He then decides that the first cause of all activity is a will, rather than matter itself. He states, "I believe therefore that a will moves the universe and animates nature. This is my first dogma, or my first article of faith."{3} He then argues that this "will" that moves matter is also intelligent. Finally, Rousseau writes that "This 'being' which wills and is powerful, this being active in itself, this being, whatever it may be, which moves the universe and orders all things, I call *God*."{4} So far, so good, but according to Rousseau, to guess the purpose of this being or to ask questions beyond immediate necessity would be foolish and harmful. Rousseau writes "But as soon as I want to contemplate Him in Himself, as soon as I want to find out where He is, what He is, what His substance is, He escapes me, and my clouded mind no longer perceives anything."{5}

The problem with Rousseau's view of God is that we can know so little of Him. Rousseau rejects special revelation and argues that it is only by observing nature and looking inward that we can perceive anything at all about the Creator. Rousseau perceives from nature that the earth was made for humans and that humanity is to have dominion over it. He also argues that humanity will naturally worship the Creator, stating, "I do not need to be taught this worship; it is dictated to me by nature itself."{6} In Rousseau's opinion, to seek any other source than nature for how to worship God would be to seek man's opinion and authority, both of which are rejected as destructive.

Rousseau believes that humans are autonomous creatures, and that humanity is free to do evil, but that doing evil detracts from satisfaction with oneself. Rousseau thanks God for making him in His image so that he can be free, good, and happy like

God.{7} Death is merely the remedy of the evils that we do. As he puts it, “nature did not want you to suffer forever.”{8}

Rousseau is clear about the source of evil. He writes, “Man, seek the author of evil no longer. It is yourself. No evil exists other than that which you do or suffer, and both come to you from yourself. . . .Take away the work of man, and everything is good.”{9} It is reason that will lead us to the “good.” A divine instinct has been placed in our conscience that allows us to judge what is good and bad. The question remains that if each person possesses this divine instinct to know the good, why do so many not follow it? Rousseau’s answer is that our conscience speaks to us in “nature’s voice” and that our education in civil man’s prejudices causes us to forget how to hear it.{10} So the battle against evil is not a spiritual one, but one of educational methods and content.

Although Rousseau thought he was saving God from the rationalists, mankind is left to discern good and evil with only nature as its measuring rod, and education as its savior.

A Philosophy of Education

Whether you agree with his ideas or not, Rousseau was an intellectual force of such magnitude that his ideas still impact our thinking about human nature and the educational process two centuries later. His work *Emile* compares to Plato’s *Republic* in its remarkable breadth. Not only does the book describe a pedagogical method for training children to become practically perfect adults, but he also builds in it an impressive philosophical foundation for his educational goals. *Emile* is a very detailed account of how Rousseau would raise a young lad (Emile) to adulthood, as well as a description of the perfect wife for his charge. Along the way, Rousseau proposes his natural theology which finds ardent followers all over the world today.

Although *Emile* was written in the suburbs of Paris, Rousseau's greatest impact on educational practice has actually been outside of France.{11} French educators have been decidedly non-Romantic when it comes to early childhood education. Rousseau had a great deal of influence on the inventor of the Kindergarten, Friedrich Froebel, as well as the educational Romantics Johann Pestalozzi and Johann Herbart. These three educators' names are engraved on the Horace Mann building on the campus of Teachers College, Columbia University. Columbia has been, and continues to be, at the center of educational reform in America, and happens to have been the home of John Dewey, America's premier progressive thinker and educational philosopher. Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick further secularized and applied the thinking of Froebel, Pestalozzi, and Herbart, and thus Rousseau.

The common bond that connects these educators is a Romantic view of human nature. Besides a general faith in the goodness of all humanity, there are two other Romantic fallacies that are particularly dangerous when carried to extremes. The first is what is called the doctrine of developmentalism, or natural tempo, which states that bookish knowledge should not be introduced at an early age.{12} Second is the notion of holistic learning, which holds that natural or lifelike, thematic methods of instruction are always superior.{13} Both ideas tend to be anti-fact oriented and regard the systematic instruction of any material at an early age harmful. This has had a profound effect on how we teach reading in this country. The ongoing battle between whole- language methods and the use of systematic phonics centers on this issue. When the Romantic view prevails, which it often does in our elementary schools, systematic phonics disappears.

Rousseau's theology and educational methods are tightly bound together. He argues against the biblical view that humanity is fallen and needs a redeemer. He believes that our reason and intellect are fully capable of discerning what is right and

wrong without the need of special revelation or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As a result, Rousseau argues that a proper education is man's only hope for knowing what limited truth is available.

Rousseau and Childhood Education

An interesting aspect of Rousseau's child-raising techniques is his reliance on *things* to constrain and train a child rather than people. Rousseau rightfully asserts that education begins at birth, a very modern concept. However, in his mind early education should consist mainly of allowing as much freedom as possible for the child. Rebellion against people is to be avoided at all costs because it could cause an early end to a student's education and result in a wicked child. He puts it this way: "As long as children find resistance only in things and never in wills, they will become neither rebellious nor irascible and will preserve their health better."{14} Rousseau believed that a teacher or parent should never lecture or sermonize. Experience, interaction with things, is a far more effective teacher. This dependence on experience is at the core of modern progressive education as well.

As a result, Rousseau was remarkably hostile towards books and traditional education's dependency on them. From the very beginning of *Emile,* he is adamant that books should play little or no part in the young man's education. He claims that, "I take away the instruments of their greatest misery—that is books. Reading is the plague of childhood and almost the only occupation we know how to give it. At twelve, Emile will hardly know what a book is."{15} At one point Rousseau simply says, "I hate books. They only teach one to talk about what one does not know."{16}

A corollary aspect of this negative view of books is Rousseau's belief that children should never be forced to memorize anything. He even suggests that an effort be made to

keep their vocabulary simple prior to their ability to read. This antagonism towards books and facts fits well with Rousseau's notion that people "always try to teach children what they would learn much better by themselves."{17}

He also believed that children should never memorize what they can not put to immediate use. Rousseau acknowledged that children memorize easily, but felt that they are incapable of judgment and do not have what he calls true memory. He argued that children are unable to learn two languages prior to the age of twelve, a belief that has been refuted by recent research.

Prior to that age, Emile is allowed to read only one book, *Robinson Crusoe*. Why *Crusoe*? Because Rousseau wants Emile to see himself as Crusoe, totally dependent upon himself for all of his needs. Emile is to imitate Crusoe's experience, allowing necessity to determine what needs to be learned and accomplished. Rousseau's hostility towards books and facts continues to impact educational theory today. There is a strong and growing sentiment in our elementary schools to remove the shackles of book knowledge and memorization and to replace them with something called the "tool" model of learning.

Rousseau's Philosophy and Modern "Tools"

Rousseau argued against too much bookish knowledge and for natural experiences to inform young minds. Today, something called the "tool" model carries on this tradition. It is argued that knowledge is increasing so rapidly that spending time to stockpile it or to study it in books results in information that is soon outdated. We need to give our students the "tools" of learning, and then they can find the requisite facts, as they become necessary to their experience.

Two important assumptions are foundational to this argument.

First, that the “tools” of learning can be acquired in a content neutral environment without referring to specific information or facts. And secondly, that an extremely child-centered, experience driven curriculum is always superior to a direct instruction, content oriented approach.

The “tool” model argues that “love of learning” and “critical thinking skills” are more important to understanding, let’s say chemistry, than are the facts about chemistry itself. Some argue that facts would only slow them down. Unfortunately, research in the real world does not support this view of learning. Citing numerous studies, E.D. Hirsch contends that learning new ideas is built upon previously acquired knowledge. He calls this database of information “intellectual capital” and just as it takes money to make money, a knowledge framework is necessary to incorporate new knowledge. To stress “critical thinking” prior to the acquisition of knowledge actually reduces a child’s capacity to think critically.{18} Students who lack intellectual capital must go through a strenuous process just to catch up with what well-educated children already know. If children attempt to do algebra without knowing their multiplication tables, they spend a large amount of time and energy doing simple calculations. This distracts and frustrates children and makes learning higher math much more difficult. The same could be said for history students who never learn names and dates.

The second idea is that students should learn via natural experience within a distinctly passive curriculum. While there is wisdom in letting nature set as many of the limits as possible for a child—experience is probably the most powerful teaching method—Rousseau and progressive educational theory go too far in asserting that a teacher should never preach or sermonize to a child. At an early age, children can learn from verbal instruction, especially if it occurs along with significant learning experiences. In fact, certain kinds of learning often contradict one’s experience. The teaching of

morality and democratic behavior involves teaching principles that cannot be experienced immediately, and virtually everything that parents or teachers tell children about sexual behavior has religious foundations based on assumptions about human nature.

The bottom line seems to be that if higher math, morality, and civilized behavior could be learned from simply interacting with nature, Rousseau's system would be more appealing. However, his version of the naturalistic fallacy—assuming that everything that is natural is right—would not serve our students well. Rousseau's observations about the student-teacher relationship fall short first because of his overly optimistic view of human nature and because we believe that there is truth to convey to the next generation that cannot be experienced within nature alone.

Notes

1. Paul Johnson, *Intellectuals*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 27.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 273.
4. Ibid., 277.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 278.
7. Ibid., 281.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., 282.
10. Ibid., 291.
11. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Schools We Need & Why We Don't Have Them* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 81.
12. Ibid., 84.
13. Ibid.
14. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. Alan Bloom (Basic Books, 1979), 66.
15. Ibid., 116.
16. Ibid., 184.

17. Ibid., 78.
18. Hirsch, 66.

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Intellectual Capital

The Learning Gap

A recurring truth of education in America is that children from high income homes who have highly educated parents tend to do well in school. Likewise, those from low income households who have relatively uneducated parents tend to do poorly. In this country, no other factor comes close to explaining the success of some students and the failure of others.(1) What is worse, recent studies are beginning to show that the gap between low socio- economic students and their fellow classmates is beginning to grow again after a period of narrowing.(2) Because of this, a major goal of education reform is the eradication of this learning gap which is arguably the primary cause of continued poverty, high crime rates, and general distrust between those who participate in the American dream and those on its margins. Unfortunately, there is considerable disagreement as to how American public education should be reformed.

Professional educators have tended to endorse a package of reforms that have been around since the 1920s and 30s. These reforms are associated with the Progressive Education Movement which emphasized “naturalistic,” “project-oriented,” “hands-on,” and “critical- thinking” curricula and “democratic” education policies.(3) Beginning in 1918 with the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, published by the Bureau of

Education, educators have challenged the emphasis on subject matter and have attempted to replace it with what might be called the “tool” metaphor.

The “tool” metaphor maintains that students should not be filled with a lot of useless knowledge, but instead, should be taught how to learn. Although various arguments are used to promote this view, the one most often heard goes something like this: “Since knowledge is growing so quickly, in fact it is exploding, we need to teach kids how to learn, not a bunch of facts that will quickly become outdated.” It has been shown by historian Lawrence Cremin that our elementary schools have been dominated by this metaphor since the 1960s, and that our secondary schools are not far behind.(4) The result of this monopoly has been a reduction of what might be called “Intellectual Capital.” The loss of this “Capital” is the focus of an important book titled *The Schools We Need*, by E. D. Hirsch. Hirsch is an advocate for what has been called “cultural literacy,” the notion that all children need to be taught the core knowledge of our society in order to function within it successfully. Implementing his arguments may provide our only chance for equal opportunity for all Americans, regardless of class, race, or ethnicity.

For Christians, this is an issue of justice and mercy. Unless we are comfortable with the growing number of people unable to clothe, house, and feed themselves and their families, we need to think seriously about why our educational system fails so many children. Teachers are more educated than ever before, class-sizes have continued to decline, and teachers have made great gains in personal income. But while America continues to spend much more to educate its children than do most countries of the world, it also continues to fall behind in student performance. Could it be that the problem lies in the philosophy which drives what teachers teach and how they teach it? Our argument is exactly that—that educators, particularly at the elementary school level, have adopted a view of

education that places an extra burden on those who can least afford it, our least affluent children.

Defining Intellectual Capital

Earlier we stated that poverty and suffering in America can be partially blamed on an education system that fails to prepare children from lower socio-economic backgrounds with a foundation that will allow them to compete with children from middle and upper-class homes. Central to this argument is a notion called intellectual capital. Let's begin this discussion by defining the term and explaining its importance. In his book, *The Schools We Need*, E. D. Hirsch, Jr., argues that "just as it takes money to make money, it takes knowledge to make knowledge."(5) He contends that those children who begin school with an adequate level of intellectual capital have a framework upon which further learning may be built. Those who lack the necessary educational experiences and sufficient vocabulary tend to fall further and further behind.

Not just any information serves as intellectual capital. According to Hirsch the knowledge taught and learned must be of a type that "constitutes the shared intellectual currency of the society," or put another way, "intellectual capital has to be the widely useful and negotiable coin of the realm."(6) Just as play money doesn't purchase much in the real world, neither does knowledge that falls outside of this "shared intellectual currency." The current controversy surrounding Ebonics is an example. I doubt that Hirsch would agree that time spent either teaching or affirming a supposedly African-based language system is helpful to young people who need to compete in the American economic system.

Understanding Hirsch's point about intellectual capital would interesting, but not very useful, if not for the fact that research has shown that initial deficits in specific children can be overcome if done so at an early age. Other nations, with equally diverse populations, have shown that early

disparities in learning can be remediated if this notion of a shared knowledge base is taken seriously. France is an example of such a nation. Its “knowledge intensive” early childhood education programs have performed an amazing feat. “Remarkably, in France, the initial gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students, instead of widening steadily as in the United States, decreases with each school grade. By the end of seventh grade, the child of a North African immigrant who has attended two years of French preschool will on average have narrowed the socially induced learning gap.”(7)

One might ask what American schools are teaching if not a knowledge intensive “core curriculum” like the one found in the French model. This question is difficult to answer because there is no agreed- upon curriculum for elementary students in this country. Our desire to treat teachers as autonomous teaching professionals often means that little or no supervision of what is taught occurs. There are a number of good arguments for local control of our schools, but when it comes to the curriculum, it has resulted in little consistency from one school to another, and even from one classroom to another in the same building.

Can’t we all agree that by the end of the first grade students ought to be able to do and know certain things? Unfortunately, it’s not that simple. At this point, we will look at some of the philosophical reasons for the vast difference in teaching methods and goals that are being advocated by different education experts.

Romantics and Traditionalists

In his book *The Schools We Need*, E. D. Hirsch argues that there are two distinct camps of education reformers in our country today. One group, virtually in control of the elementary and much of the secondary school curriculum, consists of what Hirsch calls the anti-knowledge progressives. This group emphasizes critical thinking skills over mere

facts, the “unquestionable” value of self-esteem as a curricular end, and teaching “to the child” rather than from a curriculum focused on the content of the subject matter. They also argue against forcing a child to learn what they believe to be developmentally inappropriate schoolwork. This thinking reflects the eighteenth century Romantic era view that all children possess a spark of divinity, a notion that coincides with the pantheistic philosophies of eighteenth-century thinkers like Rousseau, Hegel, and Schelling. In 1775, Schelling wrote that “the God-infused natural world and human nature were both emanations of the same divine substance.”(8) All things natural are good. Evil lies in separation from nature, such as seating children in rows and requiring intense study from books for several years.

Rather than allowing for a mystical view of child development, traditionalists support a “core curriculum.” Hirsch points to four errors made by progressive reforms. He argues that: “(1) To stress critical thinking while de-emphasizing knowledge actually reduces a student’s capacity to think critically.(2) Giving a child constant praise to bolster self-esteem regardless of academic achievement breeds complacency, or skepticism, or both, and ultimately, a decline in self-esteem.(3) For a teacher to pay significant attention to each individual child in a class of twenty to forty students means individual neglect for most children most of the time. (4) Schoolwork that has been called ‘developmentally inappropriate’ [by progressives] has proved to be highly appropriate to millions of students the world over, while the infantile pabulum now fed to American children is developmentally inappropriate (in a downward direction) and often bores them.”(9)

As parents and taxpayers, the most vital question we want answered is, “Who is right?” Is there research that supports one side of this debate over the other? Hirsch contends that there is much evidence, from various perspectives, that

supports the traditional view. However, because of the current monopoly of the progressive mindset in public education today, the traditional view is rarely even considered. Hirsch goes as far as to say that for most public school officials there is no **thinkable** alternative to the progressive view. “No professor at an American education school is going to advocate *pro*-rote-learning, *pro*-fact, or *pro*-verbal pedagogy.”(10) Education leaders usually respond in one of four ways to criticism: 1) They deny that our schools are ineffective. 2) They deny the dominance of progressivism itself. 3) They deny that where progressivism has been followed, that it has been authentically followed. 4) They blame insurmountable social problems on poor performance rather than the prevailing educational philosophy.

Remember, this discussion is about more than which group of experts wins and which loses! If Hirsch is right, our current form of schooling is inflicting a great injustice on all students, but even more so on those from our poorest homes and neighborhoods. Now, we will look at some of the evidence that argues against the progressive approach to education and for a more traditional curriculum.

Looking at the Research

Research has confirmed the superiority of the traditional, direct instruction method which focuses on the content to be learned rather than on the child. E. D. Hirsch, in his book *The Schools We Need*, has a chapter titled “Reality’s Revenge” which lends considerable detail to his argument that progressive educational theory lacks a real world foundation.

Hirsch uses evidence from three different sources to support his rejection of the progressive model for instruction. Classroom studies, research in cognitive psychology, and international comparisons all point to a common set of practices that promote the greatest amount of measurable learning by the largest number of students. This list of

common practices are remarkable in that they are exactly what progressive educators in this country are arguing that we should do *_less_* of.

First, let's consider the finding of two examples of classroom studies. Jane Stallings studied 108 first grade and 58 third grade classes taught by different methods and found that a strong academic focus rather than the project-method approach produced the highest gains in math and reading. The Brophy-Evertson studies on elementary students in the 70s found that classroom teaching was most effective:

• When it focused on content
• When it involved all students
• When it maintained a brisk pace
• When it required students to read aloud often
• When decoding skills were mastered to the point of over-learning
• When each child was asked to perform tasks resulting in immediate nonjudgmental feedback.

Summarizing the results of numerous classroom studies, Hirsch states, "The only truly general principle that seems to emerge from process-outcome research on pedagogy is that focused and guided instruction is far more effective than naturalistic, discovery, learn-at-your-own-pace instruction."(11)

Cognitive psychology confirms, from another viewpoint, what classroom research has already told us. Research into short term memory has uncovered important reasons to have children in the early elementary years spend considerable effort memorizing language and mathematics basics. The argument goes something like this: Individuals have only so much room, or short-term memory, in which to juggle a number of ideas at once, and this memory space is particularly restricted for young children. In reading, children end up having to focus on both the basics of decoding and word recognition as well as on high level comprehension strategies. This gives those who have

memorized phonics and who have a larger vocabulary a significant advantage over those who don't. Children who over-learn decoding and word skills, have more time, memory- wise, to focus on higher-level kinds of thinking. In other words, rote memorization of the basics leads to higher order thinking, which is exactly the opposite of what is being stressed by progressives.

If Christians want to see our public schools become tools for social justice, to educate all children regardless of background, a content-oriented curriculum is essential. An early emphasis on higher-level thinking skills is not only a poor use of time in the classroom, but can actually slow down students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is particularly true of early elementary years when decoding skills and a large vocabulary are being acquired.

Next, we will see how international studies add more evidence to this argument for a content-focused curriculum.

International and Domestic Examples

In the discussion thus far we have been trying to discern why much of what happens in many of our classrooms fails to provide the intellectual capital elementary school children need. At this point, it should be noted and emphasized that we are not questioning the desire of our classroom teachers, or those who write curricula for the classroom, to benefit our children. We do argue that the philosophical foundations for today's educational theories are often not supported by research, nor by a biblical view of human nature.

Earlier we noted classroom studies and findings from cognitive psychology that refute progressive educational practices. Now we will turn our attention to large-scale international comparative studies. These examples can be found in E. D. Hirsch's book, *The Schools We Need.*

Just as it was found that the best American classrooms were businesslike and focused on the job at hand, international studies found that Chinese and Japanese teachers have a low tolerance for errors and rarely let self-esteem issues get in the way of correcting them. In fact, these errors are used by the teachers for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of various tactics for solving a problem. Asian classrooms begin a period with reciprocal bows and a description of what will be accomplished during the lesson. The period ends with a summary of the work. The pace tends to be slower than American classrooms, but skills are taught with greater thoroughness. Fewer problems are covered with the focus on mastering them rather than simply getting them done.

Asian teachers tend to use whole-class instruction, utilizing students' responses to generate dialogue that moves the class towards the desired knowledge or skill. Students know that they may be called upon at any moment to provide a solution to the problem at hand. They are engaged and focused on the material. During the period students might work together in groups on a problem, but only for a short time. Asian teachers assign less seatwork to their students and embed it throughout a lesson rather than at the end of class. The American practice of giving students a long block of time at the end of class to do homework usually causes students to lose focus and become bored with the repetitive tasks.

To achieve the greatest results, the classroom must be content oriented and the teacher must be working hard to keep all students engaged in the work. Too often, American classrooms lack one of these two essential ingredients.

Hirsch's proposals, although revolutionary to many of today's teachers, would seem obvious to most teachers of a generation ago. They are also obvious to many Christian educators. A good example is the classical Christian education model advocated by Douglas Wilson and his Logos Schools organization.(12) Wilson endorses the Trivium curriculum model which focuses on

grammar in the early grades, dialectic or logic in the middle school, and rhetoric in high school. Grammar is the memorization of the basic rules and facts of any subject matter, whether it be language or mathematics. The dialectic stage teaches students how the rules of logic apply to a subject area, and rhetoric teaches students how to communicate what they have learned. All of this can be done in a way to make it both challenging and meaningful to the vast majority of public and private school students. However, failing to accomplish this soon, we will continue to see a widening gap between those who have been vested with intellectual capital and those who have not.

Notes

1. "Quality Counts," A special supplement to *Education Week*, Vol. XVI (22 Jan. 1997), p. 19. The text notes that a major study concluded that 75% of students' achievement is the result of home and family.

2. "Achievement Gap Widening, Study Reports," *Education Week*, Vol. XVI, No. 14 (4 Dec. 1997), p. 1

3. Hirsch, E.D., Jr. *The Schools We Need: And Why We Don't Have Them* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 7.

4. Ibid., p. 49.

5. Ibid., p. 20.

6. Ibid., p. 21.

7. Ibid., p. 42.

8. Ibid., p. 74.

9. Ibid., p. 66.

10. Ibid., p. 69.

11. Ibid., p. 184.

12. Wilson, Douglas. *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning: An Approach to Distinctively Christian Education* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991), p. 91.

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