

EDUCATIONAL THEORISTS

Educational theories currently applied at Hill draw from a range of thinkers, several of whom have been to Hill for consultation and workshops. While the following summaries are neither intended to be comprehensive nor exhaustive, they do provide an outline of the key thinkers who have had and continue to exert a deep and lasting influence at Hill School.

Dweck, Carol. Intelligence, argues Dweck in *Mindset*, can be conceived either as something fixed and quantifiable or as something that grows and develops, like a muscle. While neither metaphor is perfect, each has profound implications for students who hold it. Students with a “fixed” view see challenges as proving grounds, effort as evidence of a lack of ability, and setbacks as indications of natural limits. In contrast, students with “growth” mindsets see challenges as opportunities and failure as evidence of insufficient effort. Dweck suggests that fostering a “growth” mindset in children helps them develop habits of deep engagement and persistence.

Evans, Robert. In *Family Matters*, Evans argues that there exist three “quintessential necessities” for raising healthy children. First is nurture, the acceptance given to children through attention and affection, which Evans calls the “primary building block of healthy growth.” The second is structure: “a framework for conduct, expectations for behavior and performance (which provides) clear norms for how one should behave, treat others, and achieve.” Third is latitude, support for a child’s autonomy, which must be sufficient for children to learn the lessons necessary for each stage of life. Evans argues that these are fundamental and universal building blocks to healthy growth, and that they are best established as a mutual effort between parents and schools.

Gardner, Howard presents a theory of multiple intelligence in *Frames of Mind*. Gardner, rejecting the assumption that “intelligence” is a single entity, defines intelligence as the ability to solve problems or fashion culturally-valued products. He identifies eight separate but coordinated intelligences: Visual/Spatial, Musical, Verbal/Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Bodily/Kinesthetic, and Naturalist. Gardner believes that schools should offer programs which address each of these, thereby offering children the opportunities to address the full spectrum of their talents.

Hallowell, Edward. In *Connect* and *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*, Dr. Hallowell emphasizes the importance of “connectedness” and articulates a vision for raising happy, healthy, strong children. He proposes a five-step program, in which each step leads to the next, thus constituting a cycle. The first step is connection, which is established in an atmosphere “in which the child feels cared for, welcomed, and treated fairly.” Connectedness leads to play, which Dr. Hallowell defines as “any activity in which there is room for spontaneous invention.” Children who play soon learn the power of practice, the third stage, which culminates in mastery, which “leads naturally to recognition and approval by a larger group.” Recognition then re-connects children, and the cycle becomes deepened and self-sustaining.

Heath, Douglas. In *Fulfilling Lives*, Heath takes the long view on raising children, arguing that school-bound definitions of success (e.g. exclusively grades and test scores) are often limiting

and invalid. Heath, in contrast, emphasizes the importance of children's meaningful involvement in co-curricular activities in predicting their future success and health. Heath bases his conclusions on longitudinal studies that identify successful adults and report on what fulfillment means in each person's multiple adult roles: vocation, citizen, spouse, parent, and friend.

Kellert, Steven & Louv, Richard. The natural world has long provided one of the most important contexts for children's development, but many children today are far removed from nature. There are a variety of reasons for this relatively recent phenomenon, including the development of an urban landscape devoid of natural features, parents' fear for children's safety, and the proliferation of all forms of electronic entertainment. Kellert and Louv argue that connecting children to the natural world is essential both to their development and maturity and to raising a generation prepared to become responsible stewards of the Earth.

Nordling, JoAnne. *Taking Charge* provides a comprehensive approach to effective discipline. Nordling argues that parents and teachers should take a diagnostic approach to discipline, starting with understanding which negative behaviors are misbehaviors and which are the results of a child requiring assistance from an adult. Nordling then proposes four general categories of misbehavior -- not-minding, routine not-minding, self-indulgent, and aggressive -- and suggests specific responses for each. Integral to her philosophy of discipline is for adults to be introspective about their own disciplinary styles and the ways in which they sabotage their own efforts.

Thompson, Michael. An authority on boys' development, effective parenting, and children's social relationships (*Raising Cain; Best Friends, Worst Enemies; The Pressured Child; It's a Boy!*), Michael Thompson has been an influential speaker and mentor at Hill School for twenty years. Thompson encourages parents to remember "the gritty reality" of being in school as a first step towards empathizing with and effectively supporting their children, and he emphasizes the importance of a healthy parent-school partnership in raising and educating competent and confident children.

Tough, Paul. In *How Children Succeed*, Tough articulates many longstanding Hill School beliefs about the importance of effort, and the connection between consistent effort and ultimate success. Tough identifies leadership skills comprising "grit" that include perseverance, curiosity, conscientiousness, optimism, and self-control. He also examines how schools and families encourage and strengthen these skills and attitudes as they support their children's growth by learning through failure as well as celebrating success