



Learning Theory 101



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OBJECTIVES

- *Discuss the debate between nature vs. nurture to influence development*
- *Introduce various learning theories and theorists*
- *Discuss application of knowledge to practices*

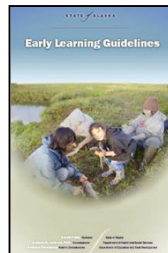


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ECE Standards

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Standard</i>
<i>AK Early Learning Guidelines (ELG)</i>	<i>Approaches to learning</i>
<i>AK Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKC)</i>	<i>Promoting child development and learning</i>
<i>Learn & Grow</i>	<i>Relationships and learning environment</i>
<i>National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)</i>	<i>Relationships</i>
<i>Child Development Associate (CDA) credential</i>	<i>Understanding principles of child development</i>



National Association for the
Education of Young Children



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Why “Learning Theory”?

- Human growth and development is complex
- Reinforce why a practice is conducted
- Based on research and scientific data
- How children learn and develop influences classroom planning and expectations for behavior
- Growth and development involve thinking, feeling and behavior
- Counters commonly believed myths about children

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Nature vs. Nurture

Nature	Nurture
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• External
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Predetermined by biology through inherited genetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shaped by environment, social experiences or interactions, and cultural expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical and personality traits stay the same	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical and personality traits are influenced by other factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A child is expected to achieve the average height exhibited by family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A child is born with genes for average height but growth is stunted due to malnutrition

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Five of the Basic Theories

Theory	Overview	Theorists
Psychodynamic	Internal forces unconsciously influence thinking/behavior; Often involves stages	Sigmund Freud Erik Erikson
Behaviorist	Child is born with a “clean slate,” events and interactions influence development/learning	John Watson B. F. Skinner
Cognitive	Development of thought process and how they influence understanding	Jean Piaget
Sociocultural	Recognizes how culture and values influence development	Lev Vygotsky
Multiple Intelligence	Considers skills/abilities overall; Not limited by intelligence	Howard Gardner

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PSYCHODYNAMIC

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Sigmund Freud

Stage	Age	Description
Oral	Birth – 2 years	Sucking, biting, eating are a source of pleasure
Anal	2 – 3 years	Bowel movements are a source of interest and/or pleasure
Phallic	3 – 6 years	Genitals are a source of pleasure; Gender role identification
Latency	6 – 12 years	Sexual forces are dormant when energy becomes focused on school and other interests
Genital	12 – 18 years	Genitals are a source of pleasure; Stimulation and satisfaction comes from relationships

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Erik Erikson

Stage	Challenge
Newborn	Trust vs. Mistrust
Toddler	Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt
Childhood	Initiative vs. Guilt
School	Competence/Industry vs. Inferiority

Stage	Challenge
Adolescence	Search for Identity vs. Role Confusion
Young Adulthood	Intimacy vs. Isolation
Grown-Up	Generativity vs. Stagnation
Old Age	Integrity vs. Despair

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BEHAVIORIST

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John Watson & B. F. Skinner

	Classic Conditioning	Operant Conditioning	Social Learning
Kind of Behavior	Reflexive	Voluntary	Voluntary
Type of Learning	Learning through association	Learning through reinforcement	Learning through observation and imitation
Role of Learner	Passive	Active or passive	Active

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COGNITIVE

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Jean Piaget

Stage	Age	Description
Sensorimotor	Birth – 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial use of reflexes at birth• Object permanence develops• Cause and effect develops
Preoperational	2 – 6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acquisition of language• Symbolic representation develops• Egocentric• Judges physical characteristic by appearance alone
Concrete Operational	6 – 12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understands quantity, size, and volume don't change when rearranged• Processes multiple ideas together• Abstract thinking develops

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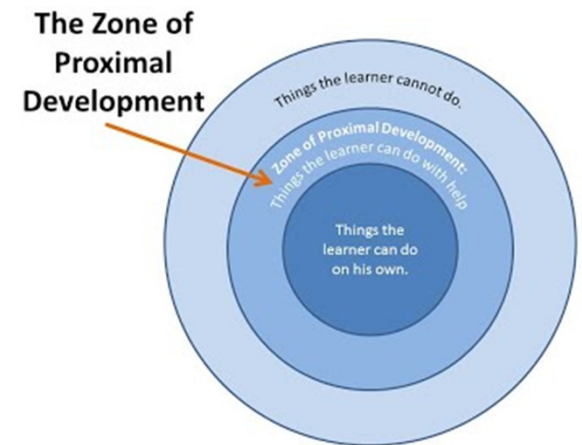
SOCIOCULTURAL

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Lev Vygotsky

- Emphasis on how values, skills, and traditions are transmitted generationally
- Values family, social interaction, and play as primary influences to learning
- Language plays central role in mental development
- Described the “Zone of Proximal Development” as when a skill is emerging – the child can’t do it independently without help

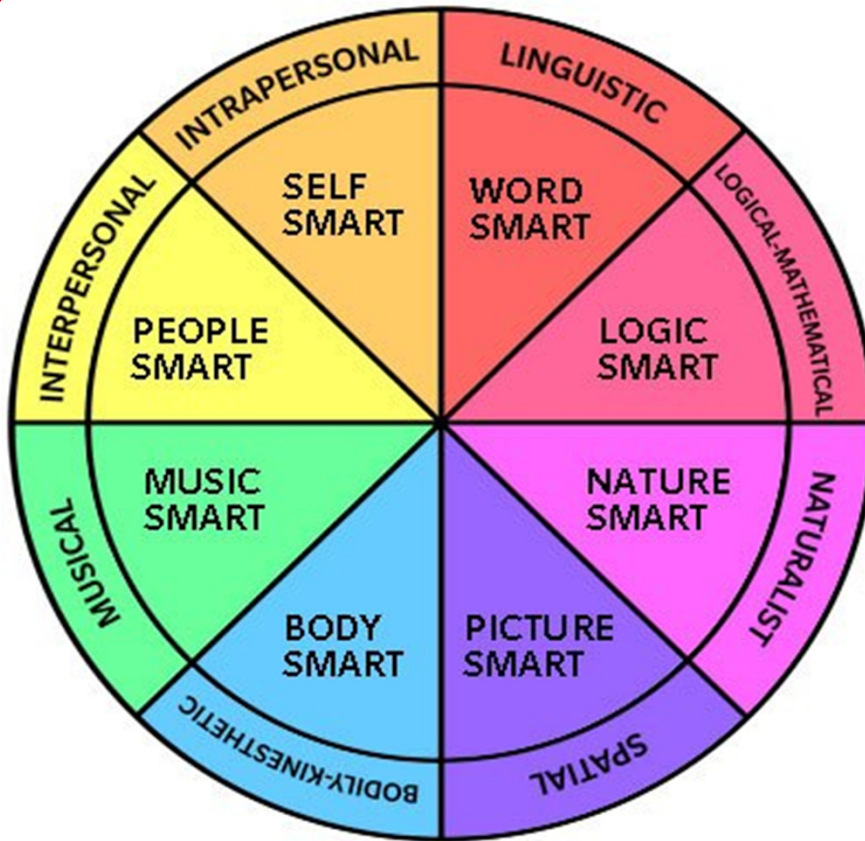


MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE

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Howard Gardner



- Intelligence is not dominated by a single ability but over a wide range of cognitive ability
- Use strengths and areas of interest to compensate for less developed areas

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Small Group Activity

- Select one theory to discuss as a group
- Discuss:
 - Why you selected this theory
 - Pros of this theory
 - Cons of this theory
 - How you see this theory in action in your classroom or program



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Why Is Learning Theory Important?

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SUMMARY

- *Both nature and nurture contribute and influence development*
- *Reviewed the basics of five different learning theories and some of the theorists who contributed*
- *Discuss application of knowledge to practices*



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Questions?

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References

Gordon, A. M., & Williams-Browne, K. (2000). Beginnings & beyond (5th ed.). Thomson Learning: Albany, NY

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