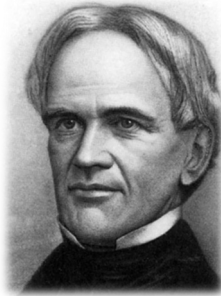


Contributions of Horace Mann and John Dewey to Education in the U.S.

Modern Geometry

Dr. Barry A. Peratt w/ Copilot

Horace Mann (1796–1859)



Philosophy

Horace Mann is often called the “**Father of American Public Education.**” His philosophy was rooted in the belief that public education is essential for a free, just, and prosperous society.

- **Universal public education:** Schooling should be free, accessible to all children, and supported by taxation.
- **Education as an equalizer:** He believed schools could reduce social inequality and strengthen democracy.
- **Standardization and organization:** Schools should have structured curricula, trained teachers, and consistent methods.
- **Moral education:** Mann emphasized character development, civic virtue, and social responsibility.

Contributions to Education

- **Led the Massachusetts Board of Education** (the first of its kind), using it as a platform to reform and modernize schooling.
- **Champion of the "Common School" movement**, advocating for publicly funded schools for all students regardless of class or background.
- **Professionalization of teaching:** Helped establish **normal schools**—early teacher-training colleges.¹
- **Educational Reforms:** Introduced reforms such as lengthened school years, improved school facilities, and standardized textbooks.
- **Reporting:** his influential annual reports shaped education policy across the U.S.

¹ After the first normal school in Lexington, MA was founded in 1839, only 8 other normals schools had been formed before Winona Normal School was formed on August 2, 1858 (renamed Winona Teacher’s College in 1921). Additionally, only one of those normal schools (in Illinois) was not on the east coast. Winona Normal School’s main building is pictured above and was located on what is now Phelps Hall. After it burned down in 1922, College Hall, built in 1924, replaced it as the main campus building and was renamed Somsen Hall in 1937. Winona Teacher’s College eventually became Winona State College (1957) and, finally, Winona State University (1975). Above the main doors of Somsen (center, bottom of next page), one can still see the Winona Teacher’s College insignia. Thelda Gildemeister was the director of Winona Normal School and Winona Teacher’s College from 1889-1934.

John Dewey (1859–1952)



Philosophy

John Dewey was the leading figure in **progressive education** and one of the most influential philosophers in the American pragmatist tradition.² His core belief was that education should be grounded in **experience, inquiry, and democratic participation**.

- **Learning by doing:** Students learn best through hands-on, experiential activities—not rote memorization.
- **Education as a social process:** Schools should model democratic society, encouraging cooperation, communication, and critical thinking.
- **Child-centered curriculum:** Instruction should begin with the learner’s interests and experiences.
- **Inquiry and problem-solving:** The classroom should feel like a laboratory where students investigate, question, and build understanding.

Contributions to Education

- **Founder of the Laboratory School** (University of Chicago, 1896), which served as a test ground for progressive educational methods.
- **Advanced the concept of reflective thinking**, foundational to today's inquiry-based and project-based learning.
- **Influenced modern democratic education**, emphasizing the role of schooling in fostering active, socially responsible citizens.
- **Wrote foundational works** such as *Democracy and Education* (1916), which shaped 20th-century educational theory.



² The philosophy of pragmatism was popularized by William James (1842-1910), whose brother was famous novelist Henry James (1843-1916), author of psychological novels such as *Turn of the Screw* and *Portrait of a Lady*. It is said that William, the philosopher, wrote like a novelist and Henry, the novelist, thought like a philosopher.