Humanistic

- Require students to work in cooperative groups in which there is a considerable amount of social interaction (Hung, 2002; Jonassen et al., 2003)

Technology is also being used to support project-based learning. Project-based learning provides structure by giving students a project or a problem, along with project goals and deadlines. A study conducted in Holland with sixteen- and seventeen-year-old high school students illustrates this approach. The students were given five hours to write an essay of approximately 750 words on how the behavior of Dutch youths changed during the 1950s and 1960s. Although the students worked in pairs, they did so at their own computers and interacted by means of a chat facility and a shared draft of the essay that each one could edit. They were supplied with such computer-based resources as excerpts from textbooks, interpretations of historians, photos, tables, and interviews. Half the students (those in the explanatory condition) were asked to explain why the behavior of youths changed during the 1950s and 1960s, whereas the other half (those in the evaluative condition) were asked to judge whether those changes were revolutionary. As expected, the condition to which students were assigned shaped the content of their discussions. Students in the explanatory condition talked significantly more about the reasons for the change in behavior, and those in the evaluative condition talked more about their particular points of view (van Drie, van Boxtel, & van der Linden, 2006).

Another example of how computer-based technology can shape the way in which students work on projects comes from Israel. High school students who worked on computer-based electronics projects were more likely than students who worked on the same projects without the aid of a computer to create new ideas, improvise solutions to problems, and use more trial-and-error solutions to problems (Barak, 2005).

Situated Learning As you may recall from Chapter 10, situated learning, or situated cognition, is the concept that knowledge is closely linked to the environment in which it is acquired. The more true to life the task is, the more meaningful the learning will be. Technology can play a key role in providing access to a wide variety of real-world learning situations. For instance, computer-based instructional technology such as CSILE, WISE, the GLOBE Program, and the WEB Project can apprentice students into real-life learning and problem-solving settings by providing access to authentic data and the tools to manipulate the data (Hung, 2001).

One project that embodied the concept of situated learning was conducted with elementary grade students in a Northern Ireland school and a Republic of Ireland school. Called the Author-on-Line Project, students in both schools read a book called *The Cinnamon Tree* by Aubrey Flegg and wrote a book report. The students then posted their reports on a portion of the Northern Ireland Network for Education website. As new reports appeared, they were read by all of the students and discussed. At this point, the author got involved by posting his reactions to each student's report. The students discussed his comments in class and, either individually or in small groups, composed a response. At one point the author adopted the persona of the book's main character, a thirteen-year-old girl, thereby giving the students the rather unique opportunity to interact with a fictional character (Clarke & Heaney, 2003). The senior author of this book can attest to the authentic and situated nature of this experience, as it parallels the exchanges he has with his editor.

THE HUMANISTIC APPROACH TO TEACHING: STUDENT-CENTERED INSTRUCTION

The **humanistic approach** pays particular attention to the role of noncognitive variables in learning, specifically, students' needs, emotions, values, and self-perceptions. It assumes that students will be highly motivated to learn when the learning material

is personally meaningful, when they understand the reasons for their own behavior, and when they believe that the classroom environment supports their efforts to learn, even if they struggle. Consequently, a humanistic approach to teaching strives to help students better understand themselves and to create a supportive classroom atmosphere that activates the inherent desire all human beings have to learn and fulfill their potential (Groeben, 1994; Maslow, 1987; Rogers, 1983).

The relevance of a humanistic approach to teaching may not be immediately apparent to everyone, but it is easy to support. First, we've known for some time that learning is as much influenced by how students feel about themselves as by the cognitive skills they possess. When students conclude that the demands of a task are beyond their current level of knowledge and skill (what we referred to in a previous chapter as a low sense of self-efficacy), they are likely to experience such debilitating emotions as anxiety and fear. Once these negative self-perceptions and emotions are created, the student has to divert time and energy from the task at hand to figuring out how to deal with them. And the solutions that students formulate are not always appropriate. Some may, for instance, decide to reduce their efforts and settle for whatever passing grade they can get. Others may give up entirely by cutting class, not completing homework assignments, and not studying for tests. A considerable amount of research from the health field has shown that people are more likely to use positive methods of coping with the stress of illness and disease when they perceive their environment to be *socially supportive.* The small amount of comparable research that exists on classroom learning suggests a similar outcome (Boekarts, 1993; Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Second, this approach has the implicit support of teachers and parents. High on their list of desired educational outcomes is for students to develop positive feelings about themselves and about learning and to perceive school as a place where they will be supported in their efforts to develop new knowledge and skills.

Pioneers of the Humanistic Approach

The humanistic approach to teaching was proposed during the 1960s principally by Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Arthur Combs.

Maslow: Let Children Grow Abraham Maslow's approach to the study of human behavior was unique for its time (1960s). Whereas most of his colleagues studied the psychological processes of people who were having problems dealing with the demands and stresses of everyday life (as Sigmund Freud had done), Maslow decided that more could be learned by studying the behavior of especially well-adjusted people, whom he referred to as *self-actualizers.* Self-actualizers, be they children, adolescents, or adults, have an inherent need for experiences that will help them fulfill their potential.

In Chapter 15 of *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1968), Maslow describes forty-three basic propositions that summarize his views (a more detailed outline of Maslow's view is presented in Chapter 12, "Motivation"). Some of the most significant of these propositions are as follows:

- Each individual is born with an essential inner nature.
- This inner nature is shaped by experiences and unconscious thoughts and feelings, but it is not *dominated* by such forces. Individuals control much of their own behavior.
- Children should be allowed to make many choices about their own development.
- Parents and teachers play a significant role in preparing children to make wise choices by satisfying their physiological, safety, love, belonging, and esteem needs, but they should do this by helping and letting children grow, not by attempting to shape or control the way they grow.

Maslow: help students develop their potential by satisfying their needs

Rogers: Learner-Centered Education Carl Rogers was a psychotherapist who pioneered a new approach to helping people cope more effectively with their problems. He called it *client-centered* (or *nondirective*) therapy, to stress the fact that the client, rather than the therapist, should be the central figure and that the therapist was not to tell the patient what was wrong and what should be done about it.

As he practiced this person-centered approach, Rogers came to the conclusion that he was most successful when he did not attempt to put up a false front of any kind; when he established a warm, positive, acceptant attitude toward his clients; and when he was able to sense their thoughts and feelings. Rogers concluded that these conditions set the stage for successful experiences with therapy because clients became more self-accepting and aware of themselves. Once individuals acquired these qualities, they were inclined and equipped to solve personal problems without seeking the aid of a therapist (Rogers, 1967).

Rogers: establish conditions that allow self-directed learning

In addition to functioning as a therapist, Rogers served as a professor. Upon analyzing his experiences as an instructor, he concluded that the person-centered approach to therapy could be applied just as successfully to teaching. He thus proposed the idea of **learner-centered education:** that teachers should try to establish the same conditions as do person-centered therapists. Rogers argues (1980) that the results of learner-centered teaching are similar to those of person-centered therapy: students become capable of educating themselves without the aid of direct instruction from teachers.

Combs: The Teacher as Facilitator Arthur Combs assumed that "all behavior of a person is the direct result of his field of perceptions at the moment of his behaving" (1965, p. 12). From this assumption, it follows that the way a person perceives himself is of paramount importance and that a basic purpose of teaching is to help each student develop a positive self-concept. He observed, "The task of the teacher is not one of prescribing, making, molding, forcing, coercing, coaxing, or cajoling; it is one of ministering to a process already in being. The role required of the teacher is that of facilitator, encourager, helper, assister, colleague, and friend of his students" (1965, p. 16).

Combs elaborated on these points by listing six characteristics of good teachers:

1. They are well informed about their subject.
2. They are sensitive to the feelings of students and colleagues.
3. They believe that students can learn.
4. They have a positive self-concept.
5. They believe in helping all students do their best.
6. They use many different methods of instruction. (1965, pp. 20–23)

Taken together, the observations of Maslow, Rogers, and Combs lead to a conception of education in which teachers trust pupils enough to permit them to make many choices about their own learning. At the same time, teachers should be sensitive to the social and emotional needs of students, empathize with them, and respond positively to them. Finally, teachers should be sincere, willing to show that they too have needs and experience positive feelings about themselves and what they are doing.

Teaching from a Humanistic Orientation

Humanistic approach addresses needs, values, motives, self-perceptions

Teachers who adopt a humanistic orientation seek to create a classroom atmosphere in which students believe that the teacher's primary goal is to understand the student's needs, values, motives, and self-perceptions and to help the student learn. This atmosphere is established primarily by the teacher's expressing genuine interest in and acceptance of the student and valuing the contribution each student makes to the progress of the class. The teacher avoids giving the impression that she

would like the student better if only the student dressed more appropriately, had a more positive attitude toward learning, associated with a different group of peers, and so on. In this kind of setting, students will be more inclined to discuss openly their feelings about and problems with learning and related issues. The teacher is then in a position to help students figure out better approaches to their schoolwork and relationships with others. The teacher does not tell students what to do but guides them to the correct action. Because the students' perceptions and decisions are the central focus, this approach is often referred to as either *student-directed* or *nondirective* (Joyce & Weil, 2004; Tomlinson, 2002).

To illustrate this approach, consider the case of a student who is unhappy about a poor grade on a test. The instinctive reaction of most teachers would be to explain how to study and prepare for the next test. The humanistically oriented teacher instead asks the student to describe his interest in the subject matter, how capable a learner the student feels himself to be, how well the student understands the subject, under what conditions the student studies, whether the student feels the teacher's instruction to be clear and well organized, and so on. To help students understand their feelings and the role they play in learning, the teacher may disclose some of her own feelings. For example, the teacher may tell this hypothetical student, "When I've had a bad day and feel as if I've let my students down, I sometimes question my ability as a teacher. Is that how you feel?" Once these self-perceptions have been raised and clarified, the teacher encourages the student to suggest a solution to the problem (Joyce & Weil, 2004).

pause & reflect

Can you recall any teachers who practiced humanistic techniques? Did you like these teachers? Did you feel you learned as much from them as from other teachers? Would you model yourself after such teachers?

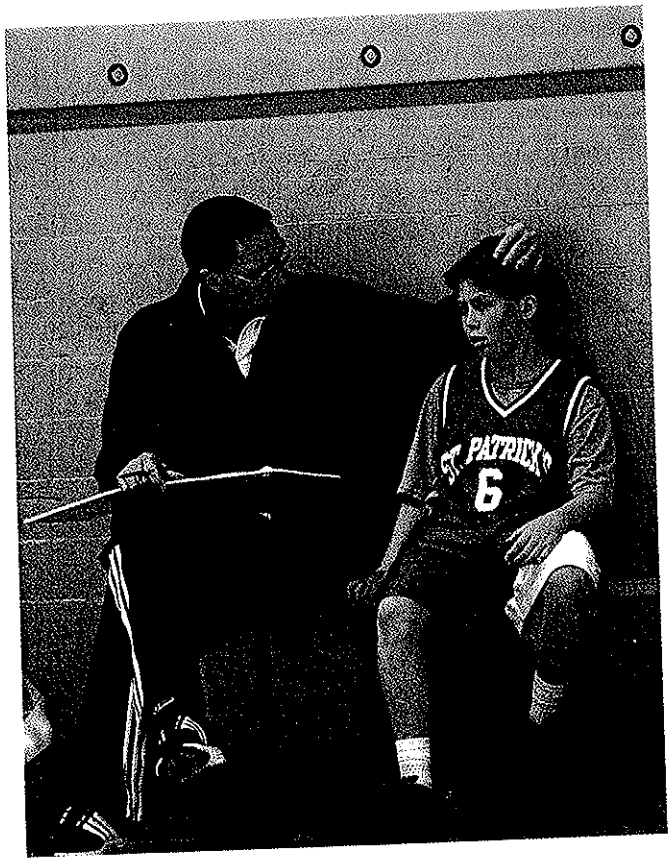
The Humanistic Model

JOURNAL ENTRY
Using a Humanistic Approach to Instruction

According to Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil (2004), the nondirective model is made up of the following components:

1. *Defining the helping situation.* The topic that the student wants to discuss is identified, and the student is told that he or she is free to express any and all feelings that relate to the topic.
2. *Exploring the problem.* If the teacher has been able to establish the atmosphere of trust just described, it is assumed that students will be willing to describe the problem and any associated feelings. The teacher does not attempt to diagnose the student's problem but seeks to understand the situation as the student experiences it and then reflects this understanding back to the student. The teacher functions more as a resource, facilitator, and guide than as a director.
3. *Developing insight.* The student uses the information gained from exploring the problem to understand how various perceptions, emotions, beliefs, and behaviors cause various effects (such as a belief that one lacks ability, leading to incomplete homework assignments and lack of interest in the subject, or a need for affiliation that leads to more socializing than studying).
4. *Planning and decision making.* The teacher helps the student identify alternative behaviors and how they will be carried out.
5. *Integration.* The student reports on actions taken, their effects, and plans for future actions.

This approach to instruction strongly implies that students who believe their teachers care about them as people and want to help them maximize their learning are likely to be highly motivated. Nel Noddings (2003), an educational researcher who has written extensively about establishing a caring atmosphere in classrooms, describes this approach as one that seeks to produce happy students. She argues that happiness should be, but rarely is, an explicit and high-priority goal of educators and



Adopting a humanistic approach to teaching means identifying and meeting students' physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs, as well as helping students understand how their perceptions, emotions, and behaviors affect their achievement.

educational policymakers (it already is for parents—they say so in overwhelming numbers in surveys of educational goals). In her view, happy classrooms

- satisfy the physical needs of children
- are clean and maintained, have reliable heating systems, are well lit, and are physically safe
- are those in which learning is an exciting, meaningful, and pleasurable experience
- are those in which children have an opportunity to learn through play
- avoid the use of sarcasm, humiliation, and fear
- capitalize on students' interests
- foster intellectual growth in every student
- foster the development of character
- foster interpersonal growth (learning how to get along with others)

Research on Aspects of Humanistic Education

As we noted previously, Maslow believed that children's academic and personal growth is enhanced when various needs are met. One of those needs, belonging, has been the subject of considerable research. Belonging, which is also referred to as relatedness and sense of community, means the desire to get support from and be accepted by teachers and classmates and to have opportunities to participate in classroom planning, goal setting, and decision making.

According to some motivational theorists, belonging is one of three basic psychological needs (autonomy and competence are the other two) essential to human growth and development. Yet the need to belong receives less attention from educators than autonomy or competence does. One possible reason for this discrepancy is the belief that students' emotional needs are best met at home and in other out-of-school groups. This attitude does a disservice to students for two reasons: teachers

play an important role in helping to satisfy the need to belong (a point we elaborate on in the following), and research has uncovered positive relationships between satisfaction of the need to belong and the following school-related outcomes (Anderman, 2002; Osterman, 2000):

- increased intrinsic motivation to learn
- a strong sense of competence
- a heightened sense of autonomy
- a stronger sense of identity
- the willingness to conform to classroom rules and norms
- positive attitudes toward school, class work, and teachers
- higher expectations of success
- lower levels of anxiety
- supportiveness of others
- higher levels of achievement

Feelings of rejection or exclusion from the group are associated with the following negative outcomes (Anderman, 2002; Osterman, 2000):

- higher levels of stress and health problems
- behavior problems in school
- lower interest in school
- lower achievement
- dropping out of school

Two studies offer persuasive evidence of the positive effect that a humanistic classroom environment can have on a variety of student behaviors. The first piece of evidence comes from an unusual source: an analysis of why Japanese students outscore U.S. students after fourth grade on an internationally normed standardized test of mathematics and science (the Third International Mathematics and Science Study). After observing ten science lessons taught in five Japanese public schools, Marcia Linn, Catherine Lewis, Ineko Tsuchida, and Nancy Butler Songer (2000) attributed the difference in part to a classroom atmosphere that Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers would have endorsed.

Japanese classrooms marked by humanistic orientation, high scores on international math and science test

In addition to emphasizing cognitive development, elementary education in Japan also places a high value on children's social and ethical development. This is done by such tactics as (1) giving children various classroom responsibilities so they feel a valued part of the school, (2) emphasizing such qualities as friendliness, responsibility, and persistence, and (3) communicating to students that teachers value their presence in the classroom and the contributions they make. By fourth grade, Japanese children have been steeped in a school culture that emphasizes responsibility to the group, collaboration, and kindness. In addition, Linn et al. found that almost every lesson began with an activity that was designed to spark the students' interest in the topic by connecting it to either their personal experiences or to previous lessons. The positive emotional attachment to school and the commitment to the values of hard work and cooperation that this approach produces are thought to play a strong role in how well students learn mathematics and science lessons.

The second piece of evidence (Ryan & Patrick, 2001) comes from a study of eighth-grade classroom environments and their effects on students. The environment created by each teacher was described along four lines:

1. Teacher support (students' perceptions of how strongly teachers valued and established personal relationships with them)
2. Promoting interaction among classmates (e.g., allowing students to share ideas, work together in small groups, give help during individual seatwork)
3. Promoting mutual respect and social harmony among classmates
4. Promoting performance goals (emphasizing competition and relative ability comparisons among classmates)

Take a Stand!

The Perennial Relevance of Humanistic Theory

As you know from reading this section, humanistic approaches to learning and teaching were formulated during the 1960s and 1970s. What you probably don't know is that they were every bit as popular at that time as, say, constructivist theories are today. But humanistic theories gradually fell from favor and eventually almost disappeared from sight. By the late 1980s, many textbooks had either drastically cut back or eliminated coverage of them, fewer papers on humanistic topics were delivered at major conferences, and fewer conceptual and research articles appeared in journals.

The reasons for the decline appeared to be threefold. First, information-processing theory, social cognitive theory, and constructivism ignited a torrent of research that promised, more than noncognitive conceptualizations, dramatic gains in achievement. Second, the humanistic theorists and researchers who came after Maslow, Rogers, and Combs were not of the same stature and did not have the same impact on the field. Third, concerns about students' emotions, needs, and values seemed to many people to be frivolous, if not irrelevant, at a time when American students appeared to be inferior to earlier generations of students, as well as to students from other countries, in terms of standardized test scores. Teachers and students were urged to get back to basics!

In recent years, however, humanistic theory has staged something of a comeback. Current conceptualizations of classroom instruction recognize that students' needs and self-perceptions are every bit as important to understanding and improving classroom learning as the quality of their thinking. The research we have described on the effects of belongingness, teacher support, and social harmony among students exemplifies this trend. So if someone tries to convince you that humanistic theories are dead, tell them that humanistic approaches to education never die; they just hang around waiting to be acknowledged.

HM TeacherPrepSPACE

What are your thoughts about humanistic education? Will you use its principles in your classroom? Explore the debate about humanistic teaching at the Take a Stand! section at textbook's student website.

Each of these components was related to several outcome measures, including the four listed in Figure 11.3. The figure uses plus and minus signs to show the significant associations that the researchers reported. Notice that the first three environmental components—the ones that humanistic educators would favor—tended to increase desirable outcomes and decrease undesirable ones. The fourth, however—stressing competition and performance goals—raised students' off-task and disruptive behavior and decreased students' confidence in being able to interact with the teacher.

The results of these two studies on classroom atmosphere have strong implications for teachers in urban areas whose classrooms have a high percentage of minority students. Black students who were bused to school or were attending an urban school reported weaker feelings of belonging than students who were attending neighborhood or suburban schools (Anderman, 2002). But Black students in urban schools who said they liked going to school described their relationships with their teachers as supportive and caring (Baker, 1999). This suggests that teachers who take a humanistic approach can offset some of the negative emotions experienced by many minority students and help produce the positive outcomes we have just described.

Figure 11.3 Results of the Ryan and Patrick Study of Eighth-Grade Classrooms

	Outcomes			
Environment Created by Teacher	Self-efficacy for interacting with teacher	Self-efficacy for academic performance	Use of self-regulated learning skills	Off-task and disruptive behavior
Teacher support for students	+		+	−
Promoting interaction among classmates	+			
Promoting mutual respect and harmony		+	+	
Promoting performance goals	−			+

+ means significant increase; − means significant decrease.
Desirable outcomes indicated in **blue**, undesirable in **red**.