

Principles and Mechanisms of Change: Julie Turner, Helen Patrick, Marty Carr, Sarah Kiefer, Jane, Alex

*Educational Psychologists speak to the Public*

We propose to develop a media campaign to counter misconceptions held by the general public about education. The general public includes all citizens --parents, educators, politicians and policy makers.

We would select five target issues. These target issues involve our core areas in educational psychology, such as how people learn and what is good instruction. An example of public misinformation is that we all have particular learning styles and that we should be taught according to our style. This misconception probably arises from the notion of individual differences, but it sees these differences as destiny rather than as a starting point for development. For instance, two common dichotomies created in the learning style message are that people learn either concretely or abstractly. It turns out that concrete learners are inevitably novice or low-performing learners. In fact, this is a developmental question. Everyone starts this way but as they learn, they become more capable of abstract learning and thinking. If teachers followed the prescription to teach “concrete learners” with concrete activities only, they would actually hurt progress because the student would never have the opportunity develop more abstract/verbal understandings. The assumption that people have one learning style is deterministic while implying that no one changes or develops. This statement integrates what we know from development and from learning and has tremendous import for instruction.

Another popular belief is that achievement is primarily genetic. In fact, the most potent influence on achievement is a good teacher. Good teachers know many strategies for teaching a child; if the first try doesn't work, then there is another approach. A good teacher is familiar with the skills and concepts children need to learn. Let's stop trying to get rid of bad teachers. Let's identify good teachers. These are the characteristics of the good teacher: (list them). This question involves understanding learning, instruction, motivation, emotion, assessment, etc., all areas from educational psychology.

Action item:

500-1000 word op ed piece with 6 paragraphs

Title: Five Misconceptions about Education

Intro (2 paragraphs)—The public receives poor, oversimplified information about education and teachers, leading to misunderstandings. (explain how info “goes bad”)

**Bolded headline subtitle** (e.g., Misconception 1: xxxxxx)

5 paragraphs, each about one misconception

- History of belief: where misconceptions originated, why they are wrong
- The accurate information (source, statistics)

Conclusion—revisiting how to spot a misconception; if you want the accurate information, can go here:  
xxxx

Other suggestions from Wade:

Wade could easily put the op-ed up on *Psychology Today*. The *Psychology Today* post would have the full article with infographic embedded. Their website has 2 ½ million views per year. In other places, viewers could click on infographic and go to op-ed. Information could also be shared through Division 15, twitter accounts, Facebook. If it is shared well enough, it could reach 100, 000, then more if it went viral.