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# Values Clarification

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## **Book Chapter**

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### **Values Clarification**

The overriding goal of values clarification is that each person (student) will be able to independently define his/her own value structure. Critical thinking educators concur that this is the most important function of the curriculum. The focus of values clarification is to emphasize the establishment of a system of justice, which will promote the well being of the person as an individual.

Those educators who have studied values clarification theory maintain that students hold beliefs that have not been fully examined. The educational reform/dissent theme of this encyclopedia posits that educational reform will encourage teachers to engage students in the process of examining the beliefs and the values that student hold. In the Apology of Socrates, the classic most famous defense is “the unexamined life is not worth living.” John Dewey maintained that education is the lifeblood of democracy. Dewey held that democratic values and cooperative work values will enable a thinking population to bring necessary change to society.

Proponents of values clarification propose that the educational curriculum provide a cognitive method that enables students to examine their beliefs. Student beliefs should be challenged, examined, accepted, rejected, or modified in order for the belief to become

a value. And a process of values clarification may result in a new or different belief system. The values clarification process may be a slow process, and the process may or may not become a “habit” of critical thinking. Educational reform occurs during a process in which the student embraces controversy and critical thinking.