In the following, I will discuss John Dewey and his ideologies of experience in educational settings, and the significance of experience in educational settings according to said ideologies. John Dewey deduces the philosophy behind traditional education and progressive education by characterizing the two systems. Dewey characterizes traditional education as a system that focuses on a set of skills that is appointed by educators and learned through obedience. He characterizes progressive education as a system that rejects the traditional ideologies in the belief that students should have the freedom to pursue individual learning through experiences. Progressive education still believes [paralleled with traditional education] that teachers should transfer knowledge to their students, but methods should be modified so that the students are more actively participating the process of learning, signifying the "experience in education" and the importance of it all. Dewey breaks down the theory of progressive education into eight parts, of which I will provide a personal interpretation of his
conceptualizations. Specific segments that I particularly thought emphasized experience in education was The Need of a Theory of Experience, Criteria of Experience, Social Control, and Experience- the Means and Goal of Education. Chapter 2: The Need of a Theory of Experience outlines the new philosophy of education and how it should connect experience with experimental philosophy. In this chapter, Dewey explains the impact of positive experiences, or educative experiences which lead to future positive experiences that are necessary for the acquisition of knowledge. This is referred to as the "experimental continuum" which asserts that educators need to produce quality experiences that will lead to more future educational experiences. However, not all experiences are equated to educative experiences, as some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience that is mis-educative are ones that have the effect of distorting or arresting the growth of future educative experiences. [Dewey, J. {1938) Experience & Education. Chapter 2. P.8] for instance, an experience that is unenjoyable for its subject, or even traumatic, might have this adverse effect on its subject. Chapter 3: Criteria of Experience summarizes the stipulations on experimental continuum. Education must focus on growing or developing, not only physically but intellectually and morally- which produces the principal of continuity. Educators must discriminate between ways in which experiences are educative and ones that are mis-educative. The concept of "interaction" and "situation" are interrelated and inseparable because and experience is a transaction taking place that includes an individual, the environment, and the subject [Dewey, J. {1938) Experience & Education. Chapter 3 Pg.16]. The theory of continuity means that the future must be kept in mind when considering every stage of the educational process. Educators need to choose the proper conditions that their subjects are learning in so they can have a worth-while experience. Chapter 4: Social Control outlines the interactions between a whole situation and the individuals involved. Dewey expands on the idea of educative and mis-educative experience by stating that education needs to consider that control of individual actions is effected by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they are cooperative or interacting parts. For example, individuals participating in a sport follow the rules of the game in order to play the game. Those who take part in the sport do not feel like they are being bossed around by an individual because they are being regulated by a set of rules or social norms. This idea illustrates the general concept of social control of individuals without the breach of the individual's freedom. In social control, no individual establishes order unless it's for the benefit of the whole group, and the individuals are a part of a community. Teachers should limit the instances in which they utilize authority in a
personal manner towards an individual, only exercising this approach when it is on behalf of the betterment of the rest of the group. This is considered a progressive approach to social control. In traditional schools, teachers were set at odds with their students because teachers played a role that required undivided obedience to the teacher. In new schools, or progressive schools, the primary sources of social control resides in nature of the work done [social enterprise] in which individuals can feel a responsible role in the contribution towards work. Exceptions in this ideology are the "weakness in control" in progressive schools that may arise from failures to adequately prepare for situations that are educative. [Dewey, J. (1938) Experience & Education. Chapter 4 Pg. 24] The rejection of social interactions in schools is not necessary, some forms of social intercourse are appropriate and encouraged for development. This all ties into the overall idea of experimental continuum because Dewey asserts that education is based on experience in which there is a process of shared commonality within an educative setting. Chapter 8: Experience- the Means and Goals of Education, in this chapter Dewey reinstates the pivotal ideologies of experience in education. Education needs to be experience based if it is to accomplish its end for both society and its learners [Dewey, J. (1938) Experience & Education. Chapter 8 Pg. 39]. Dewey recognizes that the process towards a new education system is a difficult transition. It can be dangerous if an educator misunderstands what an educational experience is. Regardless, it doesn't matter if the traditional or progressive education is better, but what is worthy or receiving the title "education" is imperative. These theories outlined by Dewey are significant because they are ideas that contributed to the progressive school system we know today; they are the fundamentals of a widely popular education system. I chose this particular subject from John Dewey's Education and Education because I felt the literal concept of "experience" in education was one of the more difficult concepts to grasp of the reading, even though it comprised a majority of the text. As an educator, it is vital to gain an understanding of these concepts are in order to maintain a status of competency as an educator.