

Going Deeper—Belief Systems and Change

Belief systems don't change easily. As we mature, the less likely we are to change. However, change usually occurs in two instances. If the prevailing culture begins to shift its values persistently and pervasively, we may begin to move our thinking. For example, the 1960s saw the pervasive influence of individualized instruction, and many of us began to behave more like self-actualizers. In the 1970s, social reconstructionism came to the forefront as we became aware of globalization and confronted environmental problems. With the onset of the information age in the 1980s, we realized that information overload demanded the exercise of intellectual prowess, and cognitive processing became paramount. The technological paradigm of the 1990s influenced our educational thought with high-stakes accountability and international comparison of various countries' science and mathematics test scores. Teachers also adapt their belief systems to accommodate new realities. For example, a twelfth-grade history teacher may take a position as a kindergarten teacher, or an instructor may move from an affluent school to one of pervasive poverty. In these cases, the teachers' paradigm changes, and so do the beliefs they use to explain their role in their new environment.

Conduct a conversation

- regarding which belief is most important.
- regarding reasons why all beliefs might be important.
- asking whether belief systems can be changed; and if so, by whom.
- asking how a classroom might look and feel for a teacher of each of the belief systems.

For additional reading see the following:

The third edition of *Cognitive Coaching: Developing Leaders and Learners* (Costa & Garmston 2015).

Garmston, R. (2011). *I don't do that anymore: A memoir of awakening and resilience*. Charleston, SC: CreateSpace. From high school dropout to advanced degrees and worldwide contributions to professional development, Garmston's story illustrates self-determination and perseverance through numerous challenges.