Chapter Summary

**LO1** Reflecting on your educational autobiography and teaching metaphor may help to clarify your thinking around what it means to be a teacher. It will also influence your personal philosophy and goals as a future educator. Your views on teaching and learning are shaped by your own experiences and beliefs. Your educational autobiography refers to your own story of your life as a student. Your personal experiences in the classroom, both positive and negative, may be what fuels your desire to explore teaching as a career. A good way to define your beliefs about teaching is to use a metaphor, or comparison. For example, you may think teaching is like: being a tour guide; being a sailor; being a sculptor; climbing a hill; or a toolbox. Whatever your reasons for considering teaching as a career—whether you have always wanted to be a teacher, or you have “fallen into” teaching out of the need for a job—being a reflective practitioner will help you define your personal philosophy of teaching statement. Your philosophy and goals as a teacher should be based on your reflection, but also backed up by evidence from research. Most importantly, though, remember that in teaching, your focus should be on the students and their needs, not your own needs.

**LO2** A teacher of your own may have had a profound impact on your life and your desire to become a teacher yourself, and may serve as a role model. Teachers do touch students’ lives, and you may have had a teacher who stands out for influencing you in a positive way. Perhaps this teacher took a special interest in you, encouraged you to succeed, or challenged you to grow. This teacher may be an inspiration to you as you begin your own journey in the field.

**LO3** Good teachers usually have common attributes; as you consider becoming a teacher, you must reflect on the goodness of fit between your qualities as a person and the demands of the profession. A good teacher needs to be: knowledgeable, alive (enthusiastic), articulate, innovative, patient, committed, and able to find joy in teaching. Teaching is a demanding and rewarding career, partly because so many of a teacher’s personal qualities are on display every day in the classroom. To honestly assess whether teaching is right for you, you must examine your strengths and weaknesses and the goodness of fit between your personal qualities and the attributes of a good teacher. If you do not possess all of the ideal characteristics, do not be discouraged, but realize you may need to develop certain qualities to be a good fit for teaching.

**LO4** Your understanding of teaching as “the essential profession” will be enhanced by your knowledge of the history and standards of several professional organizations that offer support to educators in settings from early childhood through university-level instruction. Teaching has been called “the essential profession, the one that makes all other professions possible” (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). But, there has been debate about whether teaching is in fact, a “profession.” Like other professions, teaching has guiding standards, laid out by various organizations that support educators. The National Education Association (NEA) was founded in 1857, to represent school teachers and other education professionals, including college faculty and staff members, health-care workers, and public employees. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is a nonprofit organization that aims to advance the quality of teaching by developing professional standards for teachers.

Key Terms

- **reflective practitioner** A teacher who consistently reflects on classroom events (both successes and problems) and modifies teaching practices accordingly.
- **educational autobiography** Your own educational history, told by you.
- **philosophy of teaching statement** A description of your ideas about teaching and learning and how those ideas will influence your practice. It should be based on your knowledge of educational research.
- **goodness of fit** A term generally used in descriptive statistics to describe the match between a theory and a particular set of observations; in this book, it means the match between a teacher candidate’s personal attributes, values, and dispositions and the demands of teaching.

Organizations that support educators. The National Education Association (NEA) was founded in 1857, to represent school teachers and other education professionals, including college faculty and staff members, health-care workers, and public employees. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is a nonprofit organization that aims to advance the quality of teaching by developing professional standards for teachers.

**school climate** and **school culture** The values, cultures, practices, and organization of a school.
1857 and provides a “Code of Ethics.” The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) was created in 1916 and is affiliated with the American labor movement. Both organizations provide support to teachers in the form of legal services, collective bargaining representation, professional development resources, and networking. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the nation’s largest early-learning professional organization, provides standards that focus on early-childhood education. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), created in 1987, offers certification with advanced standards to serve as a symbol of excellence in teaching.

**LO5** Teachers must be committed to pursuing a school climate and a school culture that have a positive impact on students’ ability to learn; the quality of the teacher in the classroom extends throughout the entire school and makes all the difference. The terms school climate and school culture refer to the values, cultures, practices, and organization of a school. The general social atmosphere or environment in a school is its climate, which may be described as nurturing, authoritarian, or somewhere in between. A school’s climate or culture is the “feeling” that students and teachers have in the school, and it influences relationships and learning. School climate is determined by the administrators and the teachers and, in fact, all the personnel of a school. Teachers should aspire toward a healthy school climate as individuals, which can have an impact throughout the school.

**LO6** Being a reflective practitioner means looking forward and backward and realizing that we teach who we are. A unique aspect of teaching is that it combines professional knowledge and training with the personal attributes of the teacher in cultivating student learning. Teachers must have a heightened sense of self, which can be developed through the use of reflective practices—an honest evaluation of how your own characteristics and background influence your goals and practices in the classroom.

### TeachSource Video Case

**Advice from the Field**

Find the TeachSource Video Case “Becoming a Teacher: Voices and Advice from the Field” on the student website. This video showcases several teachers, some new to the field and some who have been teaching for years. Pay special attention to their ideas about what is needed to be a successful teacher. After the main video, view the bonus video called “Essential Qualities That Teachers Must Possess.” Ask yourself these questions:

- Jot down the various qualities the teachers mention as essential. How many of them overlap with the attributes listed in the sidebar “Attributes of Good Teachers”? How many are new?
- Begin thinking about whether you have these qualities. Are there some you don’t have currently but could work to develop?