Outline of Educational Learning Theories and Theorists

Theorist	Theory	Description
Ausubel	Subsumption Theory	Mechanism by which new material presented in academic settings (lectures) can be integrated into existing mental structures. For subsumption to occur, the presentation of new knowledge should be preceded by "advance organizers."
Bandura	Observational Learning Theory	Behavior can be learned through observation of others.
Bruner	Constructivist Theory	Individuals actively construct knowledge by comparing new ideas or concepts with their current knowledge (schema or mental models).
Comenius	Pansophism *(universal knowledge)*	The idea that learning, emotional, and spiritual growth are interwoven. Proposed teaching through stimulation of the senses, not merely through memorization. Considered the "Father of Modern Education."
Dewey	Learning by Doing	Learning occurs through experience.
Erikson	Socioemotional Development	Erikson's "Eight Stages of Man" describes a series of crises individuals pass through at different ages. The stages begin with "trust versus mistrust" in infancy and continue through a series of paired outcomes for each age through older adulthood.
Festinger	Cognitive Dissonance	Inconsistencies between behaviors and beliefs motivate people to change. One basis for constructivism.
Freud	Levels of Consciousness	The mind operates at different levels: conscious versus unconscious. He further subdivided the mind into the id (primitive motivations), ego (logical portion of the mind which acts to satisfy the id - when possible), and the super-ego (the conscience).
Gagne	Conditions of Learning	For different kids of learning (motor skills, verbal skills) different conditions are needed, so different strategies should be used.
Gardner	Multiple Intelligences	Each individual possesses seven distinct and measurable forms of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, and interpersonal.
Kohlberg	Stages of Moral Development	Pre-Conventional - based on self-centered interests Conventional - based on conformity to local expectations Post-Conventional - based on higher principles

Locke	Tabula Rasa	The idea that individuals are "blank slates" on which teachers could "write" knowledge. A forerunner of behaviorism.
Maslow	Hierarchy of Needs	Humans naturally strive to satisfy needs. The five levels of needs, from lowest to highest, are: physiological, safety, love, esteem, self-actualization. Lower level needs must be satisfied before the individual can move on to satisfy higher level needs.
Miller	Information Processing Theory	Short term memory can only hold 5-9 "chunks" of information at a time. A chunk can be any meaningful idea like a word, an identifiable image, or a digit.
Pavlov	Classical Conditioning *(Behaviorism)*	The association of new responses with existing stimulus-response pairs. Classic example is pairing the ringing of a bell with presentation of food to dogs. After repeated pairing, the dogs will salivate upon hearing the bell (even if food is not presented). Original stimulus (S) response (R) pair is food -- salivate. New S-R pair is bell -- salivate.
Piaget	Genetic Epistemology	Developmental stages of child development: 0-2 years: "sensorimotor" - motor development 3-7 years: "preoperation" - intuitive 8-11 years: "concrete operational" - logical, but non-abstract 12-15 years: "formal operations" - abstract thinking
Rogers	Experiential Learning	Two types of knowledge: academic and experiential. Unlike academic knowledge, experiential knowledge is acquired to meet the needs of the learner, usually to complete an important, real-life task. Example: Learning to drive a car.
Skinner	Operant Conditioning *(Behaviorism)*	Learning is the result of changes in behavior. As stimulus-response cycles are reinforced, individuals are "conditioned" to respond. Distinguished from Connectionism because individuals can initiate responses, not merely respond to stimuli.
Thorndike	Connectionism *(Behaviorism)*	Learners form associations or connections between a stimulus and a response. Through trial and error, rewarded responses would be strengthened.
Vygotsky	Social Development Theory and ZPD	Social interaction is critical for cognitive development. Related to this is the idea of a "Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)." Some skills, an individual can perform independently. Other skills can be performed if the individual has assistance. Skills that can be performed with assistance are said to be within an individual's ZPD. The ZPD is the theoretical basis for scaffolding.
Watson	Behaviorism	Proposed that most human learning and behavior was controlled by experience (not genetically pre-determined). Believed the only behaviors that should be studied are the "observable" ones.
Wertheimer	Gestalt Theory	Some ideas can only be understood as part of a "bigger picture" Important in problem-solving.