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**Bonilla y Asociados**  
desde 1950



**Título:** Pursuit Of Excellence Through Education

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**Precio:** \$373.00

**Editorial:**

**Año:** 2002

**Tema:**

**Edición:** 1ª

**Sinopsis**

**ISBN:** 9780805831887

Although specific definitions may change over time, few goals are considered more important to education than the pursuit of academic excellence. There are many different viewpoints on this issue today among educational psychologists and other social scientists. One particularly glaring fault line in the debate divides those who emphasize developing individual learning and those who focus on promoting cultural and institutional reform. These two perspectives are rarely addressed in a single volume.

In this book, well-known theorists and researchers present a range of perspectives on how to promote excellence in education. This allows those who stress transformation of educational practice and those who emphasize individual abilities to speak to each, and invites readers to jointly consider the arguments for both positions, or for some synthesis of the two. The point is to consider how these two divergent viewpoints can be reconciled, or simply coordinated, in an effort to benefit both students and society at large. The main thesis is that excellence can be fostered without sacrificing equity, both of which are fundamental tenets of a democratic education.

The issues addressed in this book have implications and relevance for school reform efforts and across the fields of educational psychology, curriculum and instruction, philosophy of education, and educational leadership. The volume provides a unique source for students and teachers in various disciplines who want to gain a broader and more integrated view of the nature and development of excellence through education.