



EDUCATION TRENDS

Summer Reading for Educators: My Favorites

MAY 30, 2013

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During my years as a high school teacher, summer vacation was often the time to catch up on the reading I didn't have time for during the school year. My reading list frequently featured books unrelated to education, but I always included a book or two related to my teaching, as long as it was both thought provoking and readable. So I want to suggest some books that I think would be good to check out for this summer. These are my picks.

For Instructional Inspiration

The Dimensions of Engaged Teaching: A Practical Guide for Educators **(1)** is my pick for summer reading to enhance your instruction. This book is perfect for those of you who, as I do, consider learners' emotions to be one of the priorities in both curriculum and instruction. It's one that makes me want to come out of retirement and have a classroom.

The book grew out of the work of Laura Weaver and Mark Wilding at the *PassageWorks Institute* **(2)**, which focuses on helping educators learn how to effectively develop skills and sensitivities that not only reach learners effectively, but also help them develop emotionally. Weaver and Wilding led a six-person writing team to develop what is in some ways almost a guide to putting Parker Palmer's seminal book, *The Courage to Teach* **(3)**, into practical action. The five dimensions described are:

1. Cultivating an open heart
2. Engaging the self-observer
3. Being present
4. Establishing respectful boundaries
5. Developing emotional capacity

Very readable, well-organized and stimulating, it will make you look forward to the fall and putting many of these ideas into action. This may not be a book for cover-to-cover beach reading, but it is one to have on the shelf in front of you as a frequent reference for instructional ideas.

The engaged teaching website is itself a rich resource, and the writing team members are very accessible and highly focused on supporting teachers. There's a book grant program (4) for schools and teachers.

Fresh Look at a Critical Subject

Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy (5), by Emily Bazelon, gives the most interesting perspective on bullying that I've read in years. Bazelon, a senior editor at *Slate* and frequent contributor to the *New York Times Magazine*, covers the many facets of bullying. These include:

- Power relationships that play out in the public school setting
- Distinguishing conflicts that are and aren't bullying
- The sometimes fine line between which kid is the bully and which is the victim
- The increasing role of Facebook and other social networking sites

She also does some effective myth busting related to the connection between bullying and suicide, the belief that girls bully more, and the truism that harsh penalties are an effective deterrent.

It is well-researched, beautifully written and filled with insights that can easily lead to more effective responses by schools and families.

One Your Students May Be Reading

Read *The Fifth Wave* by Rick Yancey! This is recommended to keep you in touch with what many of your students will be reading, but it is also a great read for adults. It may be this year's *The Hunger Games* (6). With a great first person narrative by Cassie, the young heroine, it is the most original take on an alien invasion that I've read in years. Check it out with a free Kindle sample (7) available from Amazon.

I also want to note that the number of high quality young adult novels keeps increasing, and the line between them and adult literature is becoming increasingly blurred.

Breakthrough Book on Media Literacy

Any of you who regularly follow my blog know that I think media literacy should be a required part of the curriculum in every school. And *The Age of the Image: Redefining Literacy in a World of Screens* (8) by Stephen Apkon, with foreword by Martin Scorsese, is the most interesting book on the subject that I've come across in a long time.

The whole book is a great read, but the chapter called "Teaching a New Generation" should be required reading for every teacher.

Two Related Reads for Every Teacher and Administrator

Both of the following books tackle ways of better integrating out-of-school and in-school learning. How do we better connect schools and classrooms to the real world of work and the broader world outside? These books detail both the importance of and paths to successfully doing this.

Leaving to Learn (9), by Elliot Washor and Charles Mojkowski, with a foreword by Sir Ken Robinson, focuses on effective ways of strengthening that connection to increase kids' engagement in schools and reduce dropouts.

Youth, Education and the Role of Society: Rethinking Learning in the High School Years (10), by Robert Halpern, focuses more broadly on youth development by using a variety of learning settings. It also looks at how other countries effectively do this.

To See the Big Picture

Although these next books are probably more important for policy-makers on both a local and national level, they are worth a look by teachers and should be read by all administrators.

Improbable Scholars (11), by David Kirp, focuses on one school district, Union City, New Jersey, to show what's possible when creative thinking and action trumps formulaic responses and trendy reform movements.

Education and Democracy in the 21st Century (12), by Nel Noddings, continues the author's long history as one of our most eminent educational philosophers and consistently powerful voices for increasing the responsiveness and democratic practices in our schools. This is not light reading, but Noddings' exploration of how schools can and must address all three major domains of life -- home and family, occupational, and civic -- is an important corrective to dominant educational policies.

A Film to Miss and One to See

I usually also nominate some films for teachers, but this year's pickings have been lean. I do have two recommendations, though.

Don't go to see *The English Teacher (13)*! With Julianne Moore as the lead and a good cast, it seemed promising. But the screenplay of this comedy about an unmarried 40-year-old English teacher is weak, and the film is neither funny nor intelligent.

Do see Tom and Amy Valens' *A Year at Mission Hill (14)*, a film which some of you may know has been running in episodes **(15)** on the Edutopia website. The episodes come out two weeks apart, with the final one being released on June 6. You can find them all at www.ayearatmissionhill.com **(16)**. By the end of June, they will also be at www.goodmorningmissionhill.com **(17)**. A DVD will eventually be available.

And please feel free to chime in with your own picks in the comments section below.

Source: www.edutopia.org/blog/summer-reading-for-educators-2013-mark-phillips

Links

- 1 engagedteaching.org/
- 2 passageworks.org/
- 3 www.amazon.com/Courage-Teach-Exploring-Landscape-ebook/dp/B001D77LZ6/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1369777055&sr=8-1&keywords=the+courage+to+teach+palmer
- 4 engagedteaching.org/book-grant
- 5 emilybazelon.com/books/sticks-and-stones/
- 6 www.amazon.com/Hunger-Games-Trilogy-ebook/dp/B002MQYOFW/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1369778662&sr=1-1&keywords=The+Hunger+Games
- 7 www.amazon.com/5th-Wave-Chapter-Sampler-ebook/dp/B00AYJIJ46/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1367946372&sr=1-2&keywords=the+5th+wave
- 8 us.macmillan.com/theageoftheimage/StephenApkon
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- 12 store.tpress.com/0807753963.shtml
- 13 [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_English_Teacher_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_English_Teacher_(film))
- 14 www.missionhillschool.org/a-year-at-mission-hill/
- 15 www.edutopia.org/blog/mission-hill-2-3-video-amy
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