



Teaching the Whole Student - Engaged Learning With Heart, Mind, and Spirit

Schoem, David; Modey, Christine; St. John, Edward P., eds.
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Book Review

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This book gives both more and less than what its title promises. For the editors of this collection, teaching “the whole student” requires *engaged learning* (“active, participatory, experiential learning that links doing with thinking”) and *integrative pedagogy* (“crossing and stretching traditional intellectual disciplinary boundaries”) (1). In turn, these commitments are part and parcel of a larger commitment to educating for social justice, and the essays take on a wide array of topics, including effective and balanced service-learning, learning communities “done well,” and the importance of meaningful, sustained diversity engagement. Some of the essays are rather auto-biographical while others focus on a particular course or program. As is the case with many books of this type, the collection is an uneven assortment, and it is not always clear how an essay pertains to the promised subject of “teaching the whole student.” For those reasons, it can be somewhat disappointing.

Read in one way, however, hope emerges as a kind of connecting line and important theme. This is addressed most directly in the essay by Gillies Malnarich, who describes a moment of personal crisis as a teacher. She lay awake at night wondering, “What does it mean to educate for hope?” How can we make space for “raw, angry, heartbreaking, life-affirming hope... especially in our classrooms,” she asks, drawing upon both Paulo Freire and Rebecca Solnit’s writings (58). It also becomes clear that the kind of relational pedagogy being prescribed by many of the writers requires a willingness on the part of the teacher to bring his or her whole self into the classroom. In her essay on “Incorporating Social Justice into Teaching,” Kathleen Manning encourages readers to think of teaching as a spiritual act: “Teaching is not something learned once and perfected. The ever-changing nature of students, theory, and your personal and professional cycles as a person and professor make teaching an art. Because you are

affecting people's lives, approaching teaching and learning as spiritual practice places it in the realm of transcendence. Particularly when using principles of social justice to work toward a more just world, faith, trust, and authenticity must be part of the teaching and learning processes" (52).

There are many helpful ideas and strategies here, including the "Where I'm From" poetry assignment, a powerful way for students to disclose important aspects of their identity and express "links between their faith tradition and ethnicity," among other things (164 - the activity comes from Beverly Daniel Tatum's *Can We Talk About Race?* [Beacon, 2007]). Some of the essays include useful appendices - see, for example, the collaborative learning self-assessment (77) or the chart describing experiential classroom activities to promote dialogue (143).

Ultimately the strength of this book can be found in the questions that it poses more than in the answers it suggests. Each essay concludes with a set of reflection questions prompted by the content of the essay, and a patient, thoughtful reader could work her way through this book and be richly rewarded.

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