



Teaching for Learning: 101 Intentionally Designed Educational Activities to Put Students on the Path to Success

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Book Review

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The authors of this extremely helpful book open with an observation that is often true: there is a lot of research on how to teach effectively, but “this information tends to be inaccessible to most instructors, as it has been published piecemeal in journals that instructors frequently do not read” (xi). To help remedy this lamentable situation, they have sifted through hundreds of studies in teaching and learning in order to compile a list of educational activities that both work in real world settings and are supported by research. In other words, if you have ever wondered what kinds of teaching actually lead to learning (retention, critical thinking skills, creative application), and you would like to do a better job of varying your pedagogical approaches, then this book will be of interest to you.

Each of the eight chapters focus on a particular kind of teaching and learning format, including lecture, discussion, peer teaching, academic games, reading strategies, writing, graphic organizers, and metacognitive reflection. In clear prose, the authors explain the strengths and drawbacks of each kind of teaching as well as what researchers have found concerning each approach’s effectiveness. For example, lectures work better when instructors keep the lectures short, focused on essentials, and when accompanied with frequent quizzing and guides to effective note-taking. After establishing what works according to research, the authors provide detailed “Intentionally Designed Educational Activities” (IDEAs) to help instructors teach in a way that has been proven to lead to learning. Again, using lecture as an example, some of the suggested activities include guided note-taking, a “find the flaw” exercise, the Socratic seminar, and lecture bingo. The IDEAs, which are delightful and often fun, are cross-referenced with other teaching activities in the book and include helpful “pro-tips” to give

additional guidance on implementation. This clear structure makes the book one that can be read cover-to-cover as well as a handy reference volume for specific classroom situations.

Both seasoned and new teachers will get a lot out of this book. New instructors will find the help they need when trying to translate their graduate education into effective teaching. More seasoned teachers will find some tried-and-true methods confirmed but will also encounter new ideas to reinvigorate the classroom. While some of the 101 IDEAs in the book are clearly designed for mathematics or scientific fields, the vast majority are well-suited to humanities and social sciences and will be right at home in religious studies and theological departments at both undergraduate and graduate levels. This book has the potential to greatly improve our day-to-day teaching; our students will be grateful.

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