



A Book Review of J.D. Kirylo’s “Teaching with Purpose: An Inquiry into the Who, Why, and How We Teach”

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What does it mean to teach with purpose? In this book, Kirylo carefully guides his readers on a journey of inquiry and discovery to learn more about the who, why, and how teachers teach. His goal is to underscore what it means to be a teacher; to present critical aspects that intersect the teaching and learning process; and, to acknowledge the numerous considerations teachers deliberate through when teaching.

The book consists of seven sections (27 chapters): From the Inside Out; Entering into Relationships; The Goal is to Inspire (An Artistic Endeavor); The Glue that is Educational Psychology; Five Components of Knowledge; Assessment is to “Sit With”; and, Teacher as Leader: Hierarchy, Poverty, and the Village. Kirylo weaves the thoughts of numerous, relevant authors and their works, foundational and contemporary, into a scholarly tapestry designed to frame his message. He provides the origin of many terms and concepts, some of which are surprising. The content underscores how being a purposeful teacher translates into an entire way of life.

According to Kirylo, teaching as a way of life implies a calling in which one works to influence others. In order to be effective in positively influencing others, he advocates for an understanding of developmental theory and the nature of knowledge. Teachers are entrusted with the most valuable treasure of society, our children – our future. Their influence is powerful. Therefore, it is critical for them to know which instructional practices are appropriate for children at a particular time.

Kirylo discusses guiding assumptions: the importance of knowing self; teaching is about entering into relationships; education is about opportunity; the chief task is to inspire; and, education is a political enterprise. He encourages teachers to realize their personal philosophy of education and to reflect often on their beliefs and values. He reminds us that reflection informs thoughtful action. Understanding what you believe and how it motivates and integrates with your school’s mission statement is integral in becoming a purposeful teacher.

From the author, we learn purposeful teachers foster collaborative relationships with students, parents, caregivers, and the local and greater communities. Genuine relationships are trustworthy, supportive, and encouraged through authentic dialogue. Kirylo describes how the many facets of multicultural education are nurtured through the teacher's purposeful incorporation of respect, hope, and justice. Based on his own teaching experiences, he has learned that teachers are in a unique position to inspire their diverse students.

In order for teachers to become change agents, Kirylo says it is critical for them to know and regard their students' unique backgrounds. Only in knowing students as individuals, can purposeful teachers create culturally responsive curriculum and just and equitable instruction that can foster inspiration. Kirylo incorporates fascinating stories of motivational teachers like Anne Sullivan, Jaime Escalante, Erin Gruwell, and Herman Boone. He believes these teachers were driven by a greater cause than self, had passion for helping others, and grounded themselves in hope. He urges us to learn from the stories of these and other great teachers. Additionally, he asks readers to turn inward to hear their own voice and know their personal story. He calls teaching an autobiographical affair and underscores how individual histories influence how and what we teach. Knowing your story, and the stories of others, adds to the artistry of teaching. Insightful teachers evolve into connoisseurs of pedagogical practice and develop a keen sense of the nuances that occur in their classes.

In addition to knowing their students, subject matter, and how to teach, purposeful teachers research how individual students learn and how to manage a classroom. Teachers are sensitive to the unique value of direct teaching, indirect instruction, and an integrated or differentiated approach to instruction. To assist the reader's understanding, Kirylo provides his beliefs as well as ideas from foundational leaders. He champions an understanding of theory; doing so increasingly enhances teaching as we become familiar with observing developmental stages and behaviors. He introduces the theories of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau to help illuminate aspects of nature and nurture and what can be defined as a child-centered philosophy of education. The author frames theorists in the context of behaviorism, cognitivism, and humanism. The works of figures such as John Watson, Jean Piaget, Eric Erikson, and Abraham Maslow are also revisited.

Kirylo says the purposeful teacher should understand the terms assessment and evaluation. Many people use the terms interchangeably; however, the terms are different. He thinks it is important to discern the unique qualities for each term and to understand when and how it should be used. For example, we do not perform assessment "on" our students but we do use assessment "with and for" them to gain information about what is happening with respect to their learning. Evaluation places a value or judgement on what we find. Formal or informal, formative or summative, evaluation provides us with an idea of the value and merit of what or who is being evaluated.

Kirylo leads the reader through a fascinating path as he explains the evolving testing movement. Recapping ideas from such leaders as John Dewey and Edward L. Thorndike, he explains how differing views about testing developed. Fueled by the quest to define and measure intelligence, an array of approaches and beliefs about intelligence evolved. Several are described.

Readers learn about the influences of such reports as *A Nation at Risk*, shifts in education, and differing perspectives on teaching. Heightened expectations for teacher preparation and more rigorous standards became the norm for reform. Teachers moved from simply testing to what is referred to as high-stakes testing. In theory, it was to yield needed reform; it blamed many failings on teachers. Kirylo presents staggering statistics on how many tests are now given, the cost of testing, and how much time is spent in preparation for testing. He postulates, in this current educational system, that the focus on accountability indicates slowing both the depth and breadth of what is actually being taught.

Kirylo states that by definition teachers are leaders. Their leadership occurs in both formal and informal roles. They are mentors, instructional leaders, heads of departments, literacy coaches, and lead teachers. Effective principals encourage and support an array of teacher leadership both on campus and in the greater educational and public communities.

Part of being a leader involves being socially conscious and politically involved. The author discusses how poverty is a major societal challenge that impedes student learning and effective schooling. Poverty influences a range of social and personal vulnerabilities in health, housing, nutrition, and intellectual stimulation. His message is straightforward. Our education system needs to be more just and equitable, engaging, culturally relevant, and developmentally appropriate.

In sum, Kirylo, a master wordsmith, takes his readers along a fascinating, introspective, and retrospective journey to clarify understanding and appreciation for what teaching with purpose means. He clearly examines the who, why, and how teachers teach. Beginning and experienced teachers, others in education, and the greater community will find *Teaching with Purpose* informative and inspirational.