

3-1-2009

## Book Review

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### Recommended Citation

Ripple, R. P. (2009). Book Review. *Perspectives In Learning*, 10 (1). Retrieved from <http://csuepress.columbusstate.edu/pil/vol10/iss1/13>

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## Book Review

**Rochelle P. Ripple**

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Bruce, M.H., & Miller, H.B. (2007). *Straight talk to beginning teachers: An instant mentor in print for secondary teachers*. Willow Grove, PA: Journey Publications.

The authors have written this book after many years of preparing teachers for secondary education. Dr. Bruce's background is science education and Dr. Miller's is social studies education. Both are Professors Emeriti from the Temple University College of Education. In this text, the authors have the beginning teacher in mind. It contains a body of essential skills which will not only help new teachers survive in the classroom, but will help them actually enjoy teaching.

The authors state that although there may be such a thing as a "born teacher," most teachers develop over time. That assertion stems from the following set of beliefs about teaching that are conveyed in the book:

1. "Born teachers" are rare. Most excellent teachers become so as a result of careful study, practice, and lots of hard work. Teachers must be prepared for life long learning.
2. The teacher must engage in reflection on what he/she does or causes the student to do in the classroom. This includes comparing what was planned to happen with what actually happened and the reasons it happened that way. There will be a great deal of self-initiated learning, and associated with this learning is the need for self-evaluation – the most important task that can be engaged in as a professional.

3. The teaching process can be studied both toward enhancing the planning process and toward making constructive changes in the teacher's behavior. The authors assert that planning is the glue which holds the whole teaching enterprise together. This is a two-part glue and the parts have to be carefully mixed. One part, teacher planning, translates *curriculum intentions* into classroom activities guiding student learning, and the second part of the glue, *assessment*, compares what actually happened in teaching to what was planned to happen.

4. Each teacher ultimately develops his/her own unique style. Modeling components from others is possible, but modeling another's style in its entirety is not considered a valid approach to development as a teacher. Additionally, the authors state that the best indicator of professional growth is the sense that the balance of expenditures of time and energy gets better as the new professional gets more experience.

This being the case, the authors have presented a set of skills teachers need to acquire, understand, and practice. Among these skills are establishing suitable objectives for instruction, planning an adequate unit and lessons, reflection on one's own teaching, and evaluating the lesson, along with a plethora of other ideas. It is meant for the following individuals:

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- Those learning to teach as an undergraduate;
- those choosing teaching as a second career;
- those having missed the benefit of conventional teacher preparation;
- those finding the reality of teaching is less rewarding than they thought;
- those finding the world of teaching is spinning far too rapidly for them to hang on;
- those wishing to improve their teaching skills;
- those mentoring beginning teachers.

This is a virtual “cookbook” of ideas, ranging from planning for instruction, managing the students and the classroom, using instructional resources, attaining desired outcomes of instruction, assessment (both traditional and innovative), and encouraging continued growth and development of the teacher.

This book is perfect for undergraduate teacher education students as well as non-traditional students who are changing fields into teaching. The book is well-organized and is not likely to be one that students will sell at the end of the semester. In fact they will keep it handy, like any good “cookbook” to use daily during their entire careers.