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Arends, Richard & Kilcher, Ann. (2010). *Teaching for Student Learning: Becoming an Accomplished Teacher*. New York: Routledge.

Pp. v + 427 ISBN 0-415-96530-6

Reviewed by Amy Spears
Lindenwood University

Arends and Kilcher provide an excellent book for experienced teachers to improve on their teaching practices. Every strategy presented has research to support it, as well as many examples of how a teacher could implement the strategy into their classroom. The reflection discussion questions provide the educator with real life “food for thought” type of questions for them to analyze their current teaching practices. Each chapter includes a Research Box that connects the current topic with an additional section from a book, article, or other source that is based on research. Every term is defined in the reading so the educator has the context in which to fully understand it. Each chapter is organized in a user friendly manner that would be beneficial for any educator. The authors also include a companion website with additional activities to conduct with every chapter. This book would

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make a great textbook for a graduate level education course.

Since learning is the focus of the book, Arrends and Kilcher define it early in the first chapter to provide the reader with the definition they will use. Learning is a “change in the minds and intellectual character of students” (Arends & Kilcher, 2010). They include the scientific perspective along with the educators’ perspective.

The focus on the difference in learning today compared to learning in times past is addressed. Teaching and learning in the twenty-first century has different societal pressures for standards and accountability. Technology is a major shift in the teaching and learning processes that must be addressed in the classroom. The authors include an entire chapter providing educators with examples of how to implement technology into the learning process. Globalization is a major focus due to the availability of education through technological reasons.

According to Arrends and Kilcher, teacher expertise is a necessity in today’s world of change and can truly make the difference in the learning that occurs in the classroom. Expert teachers are able to handle numerous tasks without needing to stop and think through what is needed to accomplish them. Expert teachers understand that problems do exist and have the ability to process through solutions to those problems. Expert teachers are more flexible than novice teachers. Expert teachers have a confidence level that is much higher than novice teachers. Expert teachers understand how to identify best practices in themselves and in other teachers. They also understand how to apply those best practices in training and in their classroom.

The authors explore learning from the scientific perspective. It can be a nice refresher course for many educators into how the brain learns. If learning is the science of change in the brain, then teaching is the art of that process. One important factor to understand is that not all learning is cognitive. Some learning is more of an emotional process. Some suggestions that were given to help out with the emotional side of learning is to: use surprise and humor effectively, use stories or music to

help students have a positive mindset before a lesson is presented, and take advantage of the teachable moments. A variety of learning styles are also addressed.

Motivation is an important key factor in student learning. Students are more motivated to learn and achieve when teachers provide them with lessons that engage them in the learning process. Students are more motivated to learn when they feel they are in charge of their behavior, and that they are not merely a pawn in the classroom. Two of the researchers the authors quote in the book, Bennett and Rolheiser, support motivation in the classroom by stating, “when we say that students are not interested, it is not that they are not interested – rather, they are simply not interested in what we want them to be interested in” (Bennett & Rolheiser, 2001). Expert teachers understand that part of the teaching process is gaining the motivation to learn from the students’ perspective.

Curriculum design has shifted through the years. The history of curriculum design started out as not having a common curriculum among teachers in the same building teaching the same subject, let alone in the same district, state, or country. Curriculum and standards drive education currently which the authors do see as a concern, because learning is not something that can be rushed. The biggest challenge in curriculum design has become the amount of topics that are required to be covered. According to the authors, topics untaught can lead to more student motivation and learning. A teacher cannot present everything they know, but they can provide the initial concepts and then students can take the initiative to learn more on the topic.

Instructional differentiation has become a common teaching technique ensuring that all students learn to their maximum potential. A teacher can differentiate in three different ways: content or curriculum, process or instruction, and product or assessment. Students in these learning environments are actively engaged working at their pace. This allows the teacher to assess different students in different ways, allowing students to achieve to their greatest potential.

Assessment comes in different styles in connection to learning. Assessment for learning, or formative

assessment, provides teachers with diagnostic information about their students. Assessment of learning, or summative assessment, is the summary of what the students have learned at the end of a particular unit. Assessment as learning involves the assessment process within the learning process. Every educator needs to understand the role of the different styles of assessment.

The authors choose to focus on the actual delivery of the instruction. Proper questioning techniques are crucial to an effective presentation. They provide the educator with strategies on how to respond to students and why one should respond in that manner. Direct Instruction still plays a major role in many classrooms, especially at the secondary level. The authors provide the educator with what effective direct instruction should look like. This book is a great resource on learning for any educator. Even though novice teachers do not have the experience, they could still benefit from all of the solid researched-based information this book provides on learning for both students and the teacher. This book would make a great textbook for a graduate level education course.

About the Reviewer

Amy Spears is a Graduate Education Adjunct Professor teaching Measurement and Evaluation, Specialist Project, and Specialist Experience at Lindenwood University. She is a Board Member of the SBU National Alumni Association and has taught middle school or high school Math or Science for more than eight years in the public education system.

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