

Book Review

Wilson, D. & Conyers, M. (2013). *Five big ideas for effective teaching: Connecting mind, brain, and education research to classroom practice*. USA: Teachers College Press. 208 pp. \$27

Five Big Ideas for Effective Teaching is ideal for people from the teaching field. Written by Wilson and Conyers, this book share with educators the “five big ideas” for effective teaching. They are connecting mind, brain, and education research to classroom practice. This includes the brain’s neurocognitive plasticity, learning potential, the dynamism of intelligence, the vital role of the brain and body, and metacognition intelligence or “thinking about what we think about”. Besides presenting the “five big ideas”, the authors also share educational research on the brain and its’ plasticity, challenges and opportunities teachers face in schooling, and various situations teachers will encounter while working in the profession.

One “big idea” discussed in the book is neurocognitive plasticity. Research has discovered that learning alters students’ thinking. This, in turn, changes the brain’s physical structure. Another “idea” is concerned with the potential of each student in the classroom, and recognizing that potential. Educators who recognize the learning potential of each student will be able to improve their teaching styles to more mentally stimulating activities and higher academic expectations. Furthermore, recent research suggests that intelligence is modifiable, and not rigidly fixed. Intelligence and the capability to critically think can always be improved regardless of age or gender. The body and brain work hand in hand in learning. As a healthy body sharpens the mind, it is essential for teachers to inform students to care for their bodies. Students’ metacognition should also be emphasized, where students are taught to monitor and regulate learning.

Rather than focusing on a student’s past or background, the authors recommend educators to emphasize students’ potential in grasping knowledge. A teachers’ attitude plays a big role not only in shaping a students’ academic performance but also their self-esteem; thus, a teacher should never label his or her students as the term dwells in a student’s mind, often prophesizing the student’s performance and dreams. This is harmful as intelligence not entirely prophesized but is malleable. Educators who read this book will see each student’s potential – high academic achiever or not. Every student, whether a high academic achiever or not, is smart and has the potential to become smarter through effective teaching and learning methods.

Though information found in this book is based on research, it is very “accessible”. Written in an optimistic note, Wilson and Conyers compel their readers to believe that they do hold the power to create a positive impact in their students’ lives. Each “big idea” is presented systematically linking brain research, plasticity, potential, and intelligence to efficient teaching in the classroom.

About the reviewer

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