

Greetings! In the spirit of sharing best practice ideas, I have decided to write about a technique I began using in my student teaching seminars a few years ago. One that has served as a common foundation for students who may be experiencing vastly different opportunities, strengths and struggles throughout their student teaching placements. Though we gather together frequently during the student teaching semester and discuss a fairly structured and applicable content base, I wanted to provide my own students with a common reading program that would serve as a basis for seminar discussion and a central link among my students' experiences. Each year, I have selected a book that we all read and discuss together, and I have included information on five of those texts below. In addition, I also have a series of questions that I have written as discussion points for our seminar, so please let me know if you would like a copy of those.

- ***The Water is Wide*** by Pat Conroy, published by Random House Publishing Group

This book is an auto-biography of Conroy's year as the only teacher on a remote island in South Carolina. The story raises issues of diversity, poverty, political divide and struggles with unsupportive and unbending administration.

- ***Letters to a First Year Teacher*** by Jonathan Kozol, published by Crown Publishers

Written by influential author of *The Shame of the Nation* and *Savage Inequalities*, this book includes Kozol's personal stories of his work in public schools and his thoughts on high-stakes testing, inequality of urban schools and the lack of value in critical intelligence and creativity. Kozol speaks directly to the first-year experience and includes many positives about the impact that a quality teacher can have in the life of child.

- ***Educating Esmé: Diary of a Teacher's First Year*** by Esmé Raji Codell, published by Algonquin Books

The diary of a first-year teacher in a Chicago public school, this book provides discussion points on teaching at-risk students, difficult parents and educational bureaucracy. The author's style is funny and sharp and the book allows student teachers to get an eye-opening glimpse into the happenings of a real-life classroom.

- ***Beautiful Child*** by Torey Haydn, published by Avon Books

A touching and inspirational auto-biography of the work of a special education teacher. Haydn brings the responsibilities and issues of her self-contained class to the forefront, providing the reader with insight, an incredible amount of laughter and a heart-breaking reality. An outstanding book for student teachers who want more information on working with special needs children.

- ***The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*** by Stephen R. Covey, published by Simon and Schuster.

This well-known book is an excellent guide through deeper self understanding and awareness, especially for college students who are working to find their "place" in our profession and their own world. Excellent discussion points on subjects that are easily connected to life inside and outside the classroom.

If you have ideas for other great student teaching seminar common reading books, please let me know! I'll be happy to pass those along!

I look forward to seeing all of you at the PMEA conference in Lancaster!



Kimberly H. Councill is an associate professor of music and the coordinator of music education at Susquehanna University and serves as the Higher Education/SMTE chair for PMEA.




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