



Teach Students How to Learn: Strategies You Can Incorporate Into Any Course to Improve Student Metacognition, Study Skills, and Motivation

McGuire, Saundra Yancy
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Book Review

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It shouldn't be surprising that a volume intent on teaching students how to learn is just as intent on teaching the reader how to do just that, but it is still refreshing to read a book that lays out its goals, sticks to the promises it makes, and even creates its own study guide based on how much time the reader has to give to the text. Well-structured and clear, Saundra Yancy McGuire's *Teach Students How to Learn* is as thoughtful about itself as it is about the content it presents. McGuire has composed this book to reflect her own response to and engagement with a pressing problem in higher education: namely, that many students, even those who qualify for admission at prestigious institutions, arrive without ever having been taught to learn by anything but rote memorization. Faced with college's demands of skills higher in Bloom's Taxonomy, they find themselves struggling and even failing.

With this book McGuire gives teachers the tools they need to move their students past the high school model of retention until regurgitation, helping them instead to internalize a more nuanced, flexible understanding of learning. To convey this understanding, McGuire focuses on student mindset, encouraging educators to bring in everything from neurobiological models to fellow student success stories in order to help learners see that they are not stuck being "bad" at something – that change is not only possible, but already well within reach.

One potentially significant drawback, depending on one's perspective, is how the techniques are not out-of-the-box geared to address the concerns of humanities classes. Despite the fact that most of her experience comes from teaching chemistry – and how, relatedly, most of the examples in this book are from students of the sciences – McGuire insists that the techniques

here are useful outside of STEM fields. While I have no difficulty believing that claim, it is clear that most of the methods in the book are geared toward content-focused disciplines. Fortunately, McGuire's significant focus on critical and creative thinking on top of factual learning makes these strategies flexible and worth adapting.

Most of all, McGuire is a fun writer. Personal and plainspoken, her style makes the pages fly by. (Any worries that this book might drown the reader in jargon should be alleviated by the appearance of the words "metacognition, schmetacognition" [17].) While perhaps not the most sophisticated text on the subject, *Teaching Students How to Learn* has hints and information appropriate to instructors at all levels of familiarity with metacognitive concepts, including none at all. I would recommend this book in particular to educators working with students from underserved communities, as giving students access to these techniques will help ensure their success far beyond the boundaries of a single classroom.

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