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Spectacular Things Happen Along The Way: Lessons From An Urban Classroom (Teaching For Social Justice)



Synopsis

"Spectacular Things Happen Along the Way renewed my belief that it is possible to write authentic narratives about urban schools.... I plan to make this book required reading for my teacher education students..."--From the Foreword by Carl A. Grant, University of Wisconsin, Madison

"Once I began reading, I couldn't put it down. The power here is in the details. It is a marvelous, important book and is badly needed at a moment when the values it upholds are under an unrelenting assault from forces of reactionary ignorance."--Jonathan Kozol, author of *Amazing Grace*

"In a time of ever more testing and standardization, Brian Schultz demonstrates in powerful ways what the critically democratic alternative looks like. Anyone who wants to make a difference in urban education needs to read this book."--Michael W. Apple, author of *Educating the "Right" Way*

"An amazing tale of incredible fifth-grade citizen activists that reveals what education in America's inner cities could and should be."--Jeannie Oakes, Presidential Professor in Education Equity, UCLA

"The lessons about curriculum and teaching are powerful and the story is absolutely inspiring."--James A. Beane, author of *A Reason to Teach: Creating Classrooms of Dignity and Hope*

"Carr Community Academy is a crumbling elementary school in Chicago next to one of the largest and most perilous public housing projects-Cabrini Green. It also is the location of one of the more spectacular fifth-grade classes in the country."--Ralph Nader, consumer advocate, author, and founder, Public Citizen research group

"This fifth-grade class illustrates some important lessons about America: The neglect of the inner-city poor, the virtues of creative public service, of teaching to educate-not just to pass a test-and of perseverance."--Robert Siegel, *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio

"When city kids are thought to be nothing more than a tangle of pathologies and deficits who must be 'saved' by crusading, missionary teachers the result is always some form of colonization. In this extraordinary book, Brian Schultz, a courageous teacher writing here with clarity and passion, performs a radical reversal and provides an alternative."--William Ayers, Distinguished Professor of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago, and author of *To Teach*

"Through their compelling school improvement efforts, Schultz and his fifth graders clearly counter the colonizing policy that says only the privileged can be educated through freedom to pursue personal interests and collective commitments."--William H. Schubert, University Scholar, University of Illinois at Chicago

What happens when a teacher resists the pressures of "teaching to the test" and creates a curriculum based on student needs, wants, and desires? Brian Schultz did just that when he challenged his students from a housing project in Chicago to name a problem in their community that they wanted to solve. When the students unanimously focus on replacing their dilapidated school building, an unforgettable journey is put into motion. As his students examine the

conditions of their blighted school and research the deeper causes of decay, they set off on a mission of remedy and repair. It is finally their own questions and activities that power their profound self-transformations. This moving story is a tribute to what determined teachers are able to achieve in the current stifling environment of high-stakes testing and standardization. Anyone who has faith in creativity, commitment, and the deep potential of inner-city children and youth will want to read this book.

Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Teachers College Press; 44534th edition (March 14, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 9780807748572

ISBN-13: 978-0807748572

ASIN: 0807748579

Product Dimensions: 9 x 6.2 x 0.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 27 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #90,111 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #50 in Books > Textbooks > Education > History & Theory #117 in Books > Education & Teaching > Schools & Teaching > Education Theory > History #2685 in Books > Education & Teaching > Schools & Teaching > Instruction Methods

Customer Reviews

"Brian Schultz offers an important account of a social action project that includes both a vision and concrete strategies for teachers to consider... Most surely, the story can help teachers realize the value of placing student needs and interests at the center of the curriculum.... Even teachers who enter the field committed to teaching for social justice can struggle to envision how their progressive values should impact their teaching. *Spectacular Things Happen Along the Way* might help. Schultz and the students successfully navigated an accountability driven system so to develop an empowering, as opposed to oppressive, school experience. ... Schultz's narrative shows how students can simultaneously develop activist and subject-specific academic skills prioritized in most educational systems today. His work with his students can stand as a model of the social reconstructionist curriculum orientation, as he shows us how children can be taught to believe in and build a better world. ... Schultz offers an important contribution to literature on the civic

engagement of youth.” -- Schools: Studies in Education “This book is more than just a recounting of a very interesting year in the classroom. ... Schultz realized that in order to engage his students in their own learning, he also needed to find ways to empower them. [Schultz] demonstrated that project-based learning can be an effective way of students learning important skills. ... This book from Schultz has a lot to offer us all as we consider how to make the educational experience we offer our children truly productive. Read the book, then ponder it.” -- DailyKos “A compelling narrative of multicultural uplift that prospective teachers will embrace and find deeply engaging as they ponder their own trajectory into the classroom.” Educational Studies “Schultz emphasizes how his young students, forgotten by many, were learning how to produce change and were creating their own education in the process. ... Schultz does describe the way that teachers can utilize ideas that are based in democracy and progressivism, even if their entire curriculum cannot become like his. ... The gap between theory and practice remains, yet Schultz is able to show how these two parts of education do not necessarily need to be adversaries, and how inclusion of student voices can work to connect broad ideas and concrete action.” --Education and Urban Society”Sometimes we need an outside voice to tap us on the shoulder and say: ‘Snap out of it!’ Brian Schultz’s “Spectacular Things Happen Along the Way” does just that. It also sheds valuable light on the necessity for teachers, administrators, parents and policy-makers to tear themselves free from acquiescing to the often suffocating inertia of standardized education. Not every class or every teacher is capable of such a complete break from standard classroom experiences. However, there is much to be gained from Schultz’s example of the possibilities of student-directed (rather than textbook-directed) learning, assessment via portfolio building (rather than high-stakes test scores) and collaborative project work (rather than teaching to the test).” --The Huffington Post”Education books such as Spectacular Things Happen Along the Way: Lessons from an Urban Classroom are ‘rare.’ Writings that trouble prevailing non-critical constructions, that give a true sense of what it is like to teach in an urban school, and that portray African Americans as achievers (other than on athletic fields) are rare. Finding a book where readers can almost feel what it is like to be there as a witness and where the theoretical and methodological approaches to intellectual inquiry are connected to the cultural, political and personal is indeed unusual. Schultz’s book attempts to get to the root of the is --The Midwest Book Review”Brian Schultz offers an important account of a social action project that includes both a vision and concrete strategies for teachers to consider... Most surely, the story can help teachers realize the value of placing student needs and interests at the center of the curriculum.... Even teachers who enter the field committed to teaching for social justice can struggle to envision how their progressive values should impact their teaching. Spectacular

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intellectual inquiry are connected to the cultural, political and personal is indeed unusual. Schultz's book attempts to get to the root of the is --The Midwest Book Review

Brian D. Schultz is an assistant professor of education and honors faculty at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) in Chicago. He also taught in the Chicago Public Schools and in 2005 received the Educator of the Year Award from the Illinois Computing Educators. Brian is the recipient of 2008 Early Career Awards from the American Education Research Association in both Critical Issues in Curriculum & Cultural Studies, and Narrative & Research.

Great for College Course as Requested! especially price for a freshman in college!

REALLY GREAT READ! Very interesting book for teachers and non-teachers alike. Enlightening and really makes you think about your practices. I recommend for any person to read this!

This book provides real accounts of an urban classroom. The curriculum and instruction insight is incredible. Definitely a must read.

It was an easy read and useful for my Urban Ed class assignment.

We are reading this book as our book club selection. The project Brian created is incredible. We know that most schools would not tolerate his break from regular curriculum. We also know that his kids learned more than they ever would have by following prescribed curriculum. I was a unique situation with someone who could imagine something better. I hope we hear from his kids as writers and researchers down the road.

This was a required textbook for a grad class I took. It is very inspirational about how teachers can change the way we look at curriculum. Gives some good suggestions if you're trying to bring in problem-based learning or student-centered curriculum.

I haven't read the book yet because it's for a class I'm taking over the summer. It came super fast and was in great condition. I've had a few teachers recommend it.

This book is great for beginning teachers or teachers that have been in the field for years. It will

inspire anyone to want to teach in a better way.

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