



Being Creative: The Challenge of Change in the Classroom

Chaz Pugliese
Delta Publishing 2010
96 pages
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One of the ongoing challenges teachers face is how to consistently and creatively engage students in the learning process. In *Being Creative: The Challenge of Change in*

the Classroom, Chaz Pugliese addresses these very issues. The book is a useful resource for teachers seeking to motivate their students and enhance their own abilities by thinking outside of the box.

The book is divided into three sections: theory, practice and development. Section A provides historical perspectives and theoretical approaches regarding the origin and perception of creativity. This unit delves deeply into the psycho-social concepts of creativity and the view of teaching as both a science and an art. The author stresses the importance of focusing on a 'student-centered' teaching approach, tailoring the lesson to the learning needs and styles of the student while keeping it simple and playful. He emphasises the necessity of moving out of one's comfort zone and embracing risk in order to become a more creative and effective teacher.

Section B of the book showcases over one hundred classroom activities geared to adding creativity and interest to any lesson plan. The activities require minimal prep-time and range from group processes designed to build rapport and create positive energy in the classroom to those which incorporate music, art, pictures and creative text to evoke inspiration. The author provides recommendations for each activity and specific songs and texts that have worked well for him.

In one fluency task, students use a picture of an unknown person and write a biography for that person. Students then speak in groups and share stories. They then merge their work to come up with one biography. In another activity, instrumental music is used to promote language development. Students listen to the music three times, writing about a different sensory experience each time, after which they share their work with a partner.

In the final section, Pugliese offers several personal development exercises readers can work through individually or in workshops, aimed at stimulating confidence in their own innate creativity.

Pugliese has incorporated useful margin notes succinctly summarising the content, which the reader may find particularly helpful in theory-laden Section A. The strength of the book lies in the author's own creativity, evidenced in the engaging activities found throughout Sections B and C. Pugliese's ability to effectively mix theory and practice makes *Being Creative: The Challenge of Change in the Classroom*, in my opinion, required reading.

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English Explorer

Helen Stephenson
Heinle Cengage Learning
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English Explorer is an excellent CEF five-level book for English learner students who are learning English by extending their knowledge through texts. The tasks are communicative in nature and utilise *National Geographic* materials to engage their learners' interests when reading. There are graphic organisers to assist visual learners and tasks are also organised in such a way as to prepare learners for common proficiency tests.

This is a pertinent series because all of *English Explorer's* topics are relevant for today's youth and contain very good, colourful visual aids. The series gives students the opportunity to begin at a very basic level. The grammar is presented in an easy way and a small portion of each unit, as well as its vocabulary, is associated with previous levels. The recycling of lexis and grammar helps students to recall them at a later date and use them in subsequent tasks. I think it is terrific that students are able to associate the process of learning English reading skills with other content-based subjects such as mathematics and biology. Overall, *English Explorer* aids students in acquiring English as a second language by providing them with easy and fun tasks.

Although everything in the book will likely be attractive to new learners, I felt it would have been nice if the Teacher's Resource Book had included a programme where they could put together their own exercises and assessments according to their individual group of students' needs and interests rather than having to use the ready-made test. It would also be of benefit if teachers were able to alter the format of the video worksheets so that they could be used with more than one level.

I especially liked the picture dictionary and the tasks which allow students to score their own tasks. This development of learner autonomy is especially important in high school where students are meant to learn soft skills at the same time as literacy skills. These new materials will be of great interest to my classes this fall. I am looking forward to using them!

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