

Summer Reading List: 5 Books on Professional Development

The summer is almost here. If you are like most educators, this is when you find the time to read your "teacher books" and learn about all those exciting strategies and resources that will give your classroom a fresh look in the fall.

Here are five books that are worth a look.

Something Fun

Total Participation Techniques, by [Persida](#) and [William Himmele](#), is a book that I had been eyeing for a few years, and I finally decided to take the plunge when it received praise from one of my colleagues. When walking into a teacher's classroom, I generally first and foremost notice whether or not the teacher has established an environment of respect and rapport. My attention then turns to the students' opportunities to respond. I ask myself, "How long does each student have to be actively engaged in order to 'make it through' the current lesson?" The authors suggest something along the lines of [Think-Pair-Share](#):

Total Participation Techniques (TPTs) are teaching techniques that allow for all students to demonstrate, at the same time, active participation and cognitive engagement in the topic being studied.

The book details 37 strategies in a way that makes them nearly instantly usable in the classroom, allowing for the reader/teacher to almost effortlessly increase student engagement and accountability.

Something Practical

I had first heard of *Super Core!* when one of my former coworkers was moved by author [Mark Weakland](#)'s presentation at a local conference. Some of the best professional development "meets teachers where they are" by building on top of what they are already doing, rather than ignoring their current efforts and asking them to throw out the baby with the bathwater. According to *Super Core!*, "almost three out of four U.S. elementary schools use basal readers." So the author focuses on how teachers can improve upon their language arts instruction while using their basal reading program as a starting point. Areas of emphasis include grammar, vocabulary instruction, reading comprehension, extended reading, extended writing, and spelling instruction. Throughout the book, Weakland offers practical activities and strategies in regards to how teachers can tweak their basal program for the benefit of everyone involved.

Something Research-Based

Fair Isn't Always Equal by [Rick Wormeli](#) is an oldie but a goodie. This book was first recommended to me

by a middle school principal. While I dabbled in it during my time as a teacher, it was not until I left the classroom that I decided to read it cover to cover, and waiting so long to do this was a huge mistake! After reading this book, there are easily a handful of changes that I would make to my assessing and grading procedures if I were to return to the classroom as a teacher. A few of these changes include:

- Organizing my grade book by assessments *and* their respective learning goals
- Providing students with multiple opportunities for retakes following the majority of these assessments
- Less group grades and more individual accountability.

I have always thought that assessing and grading is the one area in which there is the widest gap between research and what is actually taking place in classrooms (with my classroom having not been the exception). This book does a tremendous job of touching upon all of the topic's key points without getting too technical.

Something Digital

I have to admit that I was hesitant to read *Digital Leadership* by [Eric Sheninger](#), as the word "fluff" is what usually comes to mind when I think of books related to educational technology. To find the most current information, it would seem more practical to search blogs, website articles, Twitter, etc. Nevertheless, this book is anything but fluff, and it certainly is up to date. Sheninger, a former high school principal who has emerged as a thought leader in this age of digital leadership, has written a book that can serve as inspiration and an effective starting point for administrators and/or teachers who have realized that they must either infuse their practice with more progressive techniques, or entirely revamp their work to provide students with more contemporary and relevant learning experiences. Sheninger's work is valuable because he writes with a tone that is confident, passionate, and convincing. After reading this book, it would be difficult for anyone to argue, "He's completely wrong," or "This wouldn't work in our district."

Something Connected

As of now there are about 20 books in the [Corwin Connected Educator Series](#), a seemingly ever-growing set of titles masterminded by [Peter DeWitt](#) and Corwin Press. Each book is short enough to be read in one sitting, which makes the collection ideal for book studies and professional development, both during the summer and throughout the school year. Also, each paperback is authored by one or two educators who speak (and blog, tweet, etc.) with a credible voice in the world of connected education. Some of the topics include:

- [Flipped leadership](#)

- Tools for connecting educators, parents, and communities
- Blogging for educators
- Best practices for establishing a makerspace
- Tools to connect and empower teachers.

Finally, all of the authors are active on social media, and they regularly present at local conferences, which helps in bringing to life the contents of these books.

What books do you recommend for summer reading?