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*International Forum*  
*Vol. 24, No. 1*  
*June 2021*  
*pp. 246-249*

## BOOK REVIEW

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**Bibliography:** Posey, A. (2019). *Engage the brain: How to design for learning that taps into the power of emotion*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. \$18.52

Allison Posey is a professional curriculum designer at the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST). She also collaborates with educators across the world and within the United States of America. Her presentations on free webinars hosted by CAST are focused on how emotions take an important part related to learning. She also takes part under CAST in online teaching, training for professional development using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to ensure an engaging learning experience for every student.

This book, written by Allison Posey in 2019, is based on how the diversity of emotional needs in learners could be met in designing meaningful learning. The main idea of the book is to assist educators to consider or give weight to the emotional aspects in learners and design teaching strategies that engage them. Moreover, further contribution in the final chapter discusses remedies to help burnout in teachers as well.

There are seven chapters in this book that contribute to the themes of the content. These themes are all interrelated to each other and recommended for effective learning in students. The first theme is to activate the learning in students. In this theme, teachers need to consider the previous knowledge, experience, and environment of the learner. Moreover, it talks about more of the emotional state of student's perception of the environment and classroom tasks. For teachers to deliberately address the emotional needs of students, clear or specific goals must be set, the relationship of the lesson and student's prior knowledge is outlined, scaffolding should be established, and various options of expression should be provided. This leads to the next theme about design for variability. Design for variability discusses the universal design of learning. To facilitate both the emotional needs, choice, and learning styles, different options for representation, engagement, and expression must be provided. In this way, every learner could be successful in learning while following the measures of rubrics required by teachers. The networks in our brain are all interconnected to each other. It is no wonder that we could do multitasking at the same time. The five types of brain networks (auditory, visual, phonologic, memory, and emotional) are activated even as students think about one topic. It is also implied by the author that students learn something new constantly, and when new learning is more strengthened, the brain

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networks are involved and nurtured. Also, both nature and nurture brain networks are essential elements of learning alongside the active and reflective (looking out looking in) brain that could be infused in learning.

The third theme is about the interrelation of the first and second themes, which focuses on the attention of each learner by utilizing the guidelines of UDL. Moreover, the activation of students' prior knowledge and previous experience are highlighted for meaningful learning. Stories, examples, and role models could also be put on stage and capture the attention of students. The next theme is the scaffolding of memory in learners. In this theme, the memory could be retained more as students develop their personalized mnemonics, stories incorporated by teachers, options of integration in visual, tactile, kinesthetic, or verbal to process information. Also, teachers could facilitate the visual sketch pad, phonological loop, and central executive control of student's learning. Examples of visual sketch pads include concept maps, diagrams, models, and worked examples, among others. The phonological loop means the verbal rehearsal of new information. The central executive involves the preview of key ideas, concepts before the presentation of contents and breaking long-term goals into clearly defined short-term goals.

The sixth theme is intrinsic motivation. In this theme, the emotional state of each individual could be measured by using the mood meter called RULER developed by the Yale Center of Emotional Intelligence, plus the UDL guidelines. The states vary in positive and active state, positive and less active state, negative, active state, and negative and less active state. Teachers could use humor, readings, brainteasers, provide reflection time according to the state of emotions in students. Another component of this theme is the self-determination theory that contains competency, relatedness, and autonomy. Students in this theory could be given progressive feedback based on their competency, the positive interaction between teacher and student, and students must be able to take charge of their learning, leading towards self-motivated learners. The final theme discusses the sustainability of teaching, which is mainly dependent on emotions. The burnout emotions of teachers are also elaborated in this session with examples. Moreover, the author mentioned that teachers must be supported emotionally and professionally by using the previous six themes at schools.

The author has a strong argument for using UDL for learners to be provided with options for representation, engagement, and expressions. Variability is the key for learning to take place in the classroom of students from diverse contexts, prior experience, and emotions. She also logically related neuroscience with learning abilities, and learning could be developed through both nature and nurture. However, the part of nurture is more given weight in her discussions. There were many strategies outlined and suggested by the author on each theme of the book. At the beginning of each chapter presented, there was always a case or dilemma for educators to focus on. After the chapter is being summarized, the dilemma of the

chapter is discussed. In these instances, the author was not able to provide a clear-cut solution to the problem or the dilemma but only possible strategies to meet the need of the learners met through variation of UDL.

I would suggest that the book includes interesting pictures and charts. I would commend this book to others for the following reasons. The author's writing style is so clear, easy to follow, and understand. The functions and the parts related to the brain are described in a simple style for readers to understand precisely. Moreover, each chapter includes a scenario of a dilemma: real-life examples, recap section, discussion, and summary. The strategies recommended are practical and logical at the same time for their relation to science and research. Also, this book is suitable for both teachers and administrators to take into practice.

The themes or topics included in this book are concerning many concepts in other books. I would compare the emotional activation level mentioned in this book to what Dan Spalding, in his book, *How to Teach Adult Learners*, pointed out about a discomfort zone of learning. Allison described that the activation in emotion should not be too high or too low. When students are activated emotionally too low, the teacher might end up seeing bored students, whereas high activation of emotion could result in anxiety among them. This is very akin to what Spalding has described the situation by defining each level as a comfort zone, discomfort zone, and alarm zone.

Strategies for teacher burnout are mentioned in this book, whereas Gaikwad and Brantley (1992) introduced similar strategies. Also, the positive learning environment to support students emotionally is written by Marzano and Pickering (1992) in the book *Dimension of Learning*. Brain plasticity is also mentioned as one of the 21st-century learning by Kilgour and Christian (2017) on Ellen G. White's view on education from a best practice 21st-century perspective. About the UDL guidelines, Ramirez (2018) developed a training model for teachers to utilize effectively in proactive teaching. It could be regarded as the flower of the UDL guidelines. The progressive feedback mentioned in this book is also highlighted in Marzano's (2001) book, *Classroom Instruction that Works*. I could see that the concepts and themes of this book are in harmony with many other books in teaching strategies.

The audience of the book could be students, parents, educators or teachers, psychologists, and administrators, and supervisors. I could see that the author successfully communicated her knowledge by linking the neurological abilities of a person with emotions in learning. To conclude, the themes of this book have internal consistency that supports each other to convey the message of the importance of emotion in each learning experience. This is a great book worth reading to link emotions to learning and provide a rigorous learning experience for students.

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