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## Book Review: How Humans Learn

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**Joshua R. Eyler. *How Humans Learn: The Science and Stories behind Effective College Teaching*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2018. 281 p. ISBN 9781946684646. \$21.99.**

As educators, we want to be effective teachers, providing an impactful learning experience for our students. If our students are learning, then our jobs prove to be satisfying. One way to accomplish this goal is to understand how the brain processes information into knowledge. As a significant part of its format, *How Humans Learn* places the science of learning into the conversation first, followed by actual classroom practices. Therefore, readers get a survey of the research in the fields of psychology, anthropology, and neuroscience for an understanding of the science of learning. Much of this research reads like an annotated bibliography, outlining intriguing science-based information. So the other part of the format for this book, the examples from the classroom, provides enriching and interesting narratives from which educators can learn and emulate.

Joshua R. Eyler organizes his book into five primary strategies for guidance in effective teaching and learning practices: curiosity, sociality, emotion, authenticity, and failure. Each chapter addresses the significance these motives for learning, utilizing scientific research to provide practical advice for busy educators. For example, how does curiosity enhance learning? How do educators boost curiosity in the classroom? What is the impact of failure on learning? He supports the research with examples of creative and engaging teaching and learning strategies performed by professors and teachers at various institutions in the United States. Although the research proves to be valuable and insightful, the interviews and the hands-on examples from classroom experiences prove to offer the most pleasurable and instructive reading in the book.

With a title like *How Humans Learn*, we need to consider this book in relation to two of the most influential books on effective teaching and learning practices: *How People Learn* (2000) and *How Learning Works* (2010). All three of these books review the research on learning and provide helpful strategies for creating engaging teaching strategies. Eyler's book underscores recent research. And given that the science of learning and research on the brain continue to advance with new findings, readers will benefit from the extensive information that Eyler reports on in his book. However, while I read Eyler's book, I found myself thinking about how much more I enjoyed their strategy for engaging the reader in *learning*. For example, in *How Learning Works*, the authors start each chapter with an issue or problem that educators might face in the classroom. We can relate to the examples that they use. Then, when they produce the research that explains how learning happens, they guide readers through the learning process so that we understand why the problems exist. For Eyler's book, he has a tendency to be heavily pedantic in the "lecture" of the research; then, he releases us into the "recess" of engaged learning practices. Therefore, the sub-title of the book—"The Science and Stories behind Effective College Teaching"—accurately explains the rhetorical strategy of each chapter.

Although I think that Eyler's book is worth reading and studying, I have some reservations about its applicability to state comprehensive universities. First, Joshua Eyler's own higher educational experience does not include a state comprehensive university. As a graduate of Gettysburg College and the University of Connecticut, he attended a private liberal arts college and a top-ranked research institution. Now, he is the Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Rice University. As a result, educators from state comprehensive universities will recognize that the classroom examples that Eyler uses do not match their own experiences. Second, Eyler pays little to no attention to the place of technology in the classroom and outside of the classroom. In fact, he devotes several pages of discussion in which he expresses doubt about the ability to create an engaging learning experience for online delivery. I find it disappointing for him to make a judgement about the inability to engage students in learning in the online environment when he has never taught online—or, at least, he does not discuss his experience in this book. From my own experience, my teaching online has opened up opportunities to create engaging learning experiences for my students that have improved my on-campus, face-to-face environment. By using interactive and social media-based tools, my students and I become crafty innovators of learning, doing significant and meaningful activities with information to gain knowledge.

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