

## Learning from the Student's Perspective: A Sourcebook for Effective Teaching

By Alison Cook-Sather, Brandon Clarke, Daniel Condon, Kathleen Cushman, Helen Demetriou, Lois Easton


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Much has been written about how to engage students in their learning, but very little of it has issued from students themselves. Compiled by one of the leading scholars in the field of student voice, this sourcebook draws on the perspectives of secondary students in the United States, England, Canada, and Australia as well as on the work of teachers, researchers, and teacher educators who have collaborated with a wide variety of students. Highlighting student voices, it features five chapters focused on student perspectives, articulated in their own words, regarding specific approaches to creating and maintaining a positive classroom environment and designing engaging lessons and on more general issues of respect and responsibility in the classroom. To support educators in developing strategies for accessing and responding to student voices in their own classrooms, the book provides detailed guidelines created by educational researchers for gathering and acting upon student perspectives. To illustrate how these approaches work in practice, the book includes stories of how pre-service and in-service teachers, school leaders, and teacher educators have made student voices and participation central to their classroom and school practices. And finally, addressing both practical and theoretical questions, the book includes a chapter that outlines action steps for high school teachers, school leaders, and teacher educators and a chapter that offers a conceptual framework for thinking about and engaging in this work. Bringing together in a single text student perspectives, descriptions of successful efforts to access them in secondary education contexts, concrete advice for practitioners, and a theoretical framework for further exploration, this sourcebook can be used to guide practice and support re-imagining education in secondary schools of all kinds, and the principles can be adapted for other educational contexts.

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**Bibliography**

- Rank: #2657458 in eBooks
- Published on: 2015-11-17
- Released on: 2015-11-17
- Format: Kindle eBook

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"Alison Cook-Sather and colleagues escort us into a space of teaching and learning where students' voices meet demands for human rights; where educator wisdom joins with struggles for justice. Across these pages, responsibility for teaching and learning is infused with pleasure and curiosity, appetite and community, worries about the world and a vibrant sense of what could be. Despite the structural betrayal of youth in so many contexts, and because of the amazing brilliance of so many of their educators, there remains a deep commitment to educational justice. Alison Cook-Sather and her coauthors have constructed a text of radical imagination and radical utility. These writers take as foundational that youth and educators deserve, and can create, schools of justice, imagination and wonder. And then they show us how."

?Michelle Fine, co-author of *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion*

"Dr. Cook-Sather's book is an essential text in today's educational climate: it inspires and connects readers to the necessity of incorporating student voice in the classroom. *Learning from the Student's Perspective* provides thoughtful analysis and intriguing examples to demonstrate and celebrate the ways developing relationships and listening to our students can engage us all in the learning process. All educators?new and experienced?will benefit from the theory presented and its clear connection to our everyday practice."

?Ted Domers, social studies teacher, Freire Charter School, Philadelphia, PA

"This ground-breaking book establishes Alison Cook-Sather's place amongst international leaders in the field of student participation in schools. Drawing on the perspectives of students from a wide range of circumstances, the work of beginning and experienced teachers, and extensive research literature to which she, herself, is an important contributor, Alison Cook-Sather provides an engaging and accessible blend of practical insight, theoretical stimulation and inspirational commitment."

?Professor Michael Fielding, Institute of Education, University of London, UK

"In contrast to the growing trend of top-down reforms, Cook-Sather has brought together colleagues and students to remind us that improving how we teach must involve learning from those whom we are teaching. Filled with rich insights from students and creative resources for educators, this important new book highlights the critical role that student voices can play in transforming schools and teaching, and shows us how to make that happen."

?Kevin K. Kumashiro, author of *The Seduction of Common Sense: How the Right Has Framed the Debate on America's Schools*

"Cook-Sather makes the case that the best teachers of teachers are in fact the students with whom they work. After reading this book, I renewed my efforts to include my students in important decisions that affect them."

?Ben Daley, Chief Academic Officer, High Tech High, San Diego, CA

### About the Author

Alison Cook-Sather is Professor of Education and Coordinator of the Teaching and Learning Initiative at Bryn Mawr College. She works with undergraduate students seeking state certification to teach at the secondary level and college faculty members interested in developing their teaching. Her research focuses on metaphors for education and student voice, and her most recent books are *International Handbook of Student Experience in Elementary and Secondary School*, coedited with Dennis Thiessen (Springer 2007), and

Education Is Translation: A Metaphor for Change in Learning and Teaching (University of Pennsylvania Press 2006).

## **Users Review**

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#### **Juana Rummel:**

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#### **Stanley Cooper:**

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