

**Sixteen Teachers Teaching: Two-Year College Perspectives**, edited by Patrick Sullivan. Utah State University Press, 2020. 324 pp.

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Aimed at “anyone teaching reading and writing, grades 6-14” (14), *Sixteen Teachers Teaching* is a collection of contributions by two-year college teachers and students that offers a wealth of practical, research-grounded insight, information, and encouragement for instructors who envision their classrooms as a site in which students build their reading and writing skills for both their own good and the good of the larger community. Editor Patrick Sullivan and his contributors take seriously the charge to see the community college as a “social justice institution” (4), and while they are rightfully invested in making that vision as expansive as possible, they do it in such a way as to give readers a toolkit that will allow them to make pragmatic, justice-inspired changes in their own teaching spaces, whether those are housed in K-12 or in higher education. The volume is organized into five parts, each of which contains chapters written not only by well-established two-year college instructors and scholars deeply enmeshed in the work of education, but also by two-year college students who offer insights into their experience with effective and inspiring teaching and learning in the classroom.

The first part of the collection serves as a primer on the challenges and joys of teaching writing at the two-year college. Readers who know well those ups and downs and readers who may be entirely new to them alike will benefit from perspectives that highlight the broad range of student experience present at the two-year college and the need for teachers to, in the words of student contributor Bridgette Stepule, “embrace flexibility” (66). Darin Jensen’s “Dispatches from Bartertown: Building Pedagogy in the Exigent Moment” recognizes the particular challenges faced by the largest group of instructors in the two-year college—adjunct instructors—and offers a concrete sense of principles that can help sustain those in contingent positions as they navigate the community college environment and do the all-important work of education while having to hustle to make even basic ends meet. Sullivan’s interview with well-known scholar and teacher Helene Adams Androne stresses the importance of “teaching in the plural,” a pedagogical approach that recognizes that “American identity is inherently pluralized and, therefore, much of what we do will and should deliberately reflect that” (58). Together, all of the perspectives in the section emphasize the complexity of the community college classroom and the need to approach that classroom with a wealth of flexibility and passionate engagement while not downplaying the challenges that instructors and students alike face on a daily basis.

The second part of the collection narrows in on the importance of a theory-driven practice of instruction motivated by the central value of compassion. In her chapter “Compassionate Writing Instruction,” Brett Griffiths reminds us that compassion should not be treated as “the antithesis to standards” (72), but rather as a central component of writing and reading instruction that will enable students to thrive. Both Jeffrey Klausman and Jeffrey Andelora assert the importance of bringing scholarly engagement and classroom experience together to meaningfully inform praxis. Similarly, both of the section’s student contributors, Darlene Pierpoint and Kevin Rodriguez, emphasize the need for teachers to bring both engagement and structure to the classroom, arguing for the importance of passion that is channeled into clear teaching goals that recognize the backgrounds and experiences of the students receiving instruction. Read together, the contributions in this section compellingly argue that truly effective instructors take the perspectives of both students and scholars seriously.

When the volume takes up the question of equity and social justice in its third section, it provides both practical tools for how to make classrooms more equitable and antiracist and reminds instructors of the importance of reflecting on the way in which our own privilege impacts the classroom spaces that we create. Scholars Holly Hassel and Hope Parisi emphasize our need to recognize the skills and strengths our students bring to the table and to adapt our classrooms and pedagogy to those skills. Parisi further points to the need to turn absences—in attendance, in submitted assignments, in particular rhetorical fluencies—into presences, explaining that “in community college settings, the *getting here* and *coming back* are large recurrent moments for celebrating what student presence means” (166, emphasis in original). Student Lauren Sills echoes that emphasis, reminding readers that community college students are motivated to be present and to create and benefit from the unique kinds of community that two-year colleges have to offer.

The third section of the volume also includes a much-needed reprint of an article first published in *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* in 2016: “The Risky Business of Engaging Racial Equity in Writing Instruction: A Tragedy in Five Acts,” with a postscript specifically added for this collection. Within it, Taiyon J. Coleman, Renee DeLong, Kathleen Sheerin DeVore, Shannon Gibney, and Michael Kuhne discuss the significant challenges they encountered when they attempted to create a two-year college English department centered on racial justice and accountability; their postscript notes that their work to share those challenges has resulted in pushback that “really should not have been surprising as we’re telling tales ‘outside the house,’ sharing long-kept secrets, and mostly asking a still-white-supremacist field, college comp instruction in America, to tell the truth about that ongoing colonizing violence, and to help us end it” (195). Rather than a warning against the perils of doing such

work—though their chapter outlines those compellingly—their work serves to highlight how critical it is for writing instructors to commit to equity and form local and national coalitions to decolonize classrooms and transform them into spaces of racial justice. After all, as the authors argue, “while doing equity work is hard, not doing equity work will continue to produce misery and trauma” (175).

The final section of the collection narrows in to examine recent shifts in the teaching of developmental reading and writing. Two chapters by Jamey Gallagher and Peter Adams, explore the development of the Accelerated Learning Program, or ALP, model for integrating writing and reading support into the college-level classroom, explaining how the approach has evolved over the last two decades and providing practical examples of how to structure ALP classrooms and assignments. Student Jamil Shakoor pushes against the growing trend to do away with as many remedial offerings as possible, using his personal experience to emphasize the importance of giving students who are not traditionally prepared for college time to gain skills and adjust to its rigors. And in her chapter “Second-Chance Pedagogy: Integrating College-Level Skills and Strategies into a Developmental Writing Course,” Joanne Baird Giordano explains what she learned through the process of creating a developmental course that integrates reading and writing, namely that developmental students thrive when they are given college-level work and supported throughout their process of engaging with it. The section would have benefited from a chapter that more directly engaged with the concerns outlined by Shakoor about losing remedial opportunities at the two-year college. Despite that, and though coming from sometimes notably different perspectives, all chapters in the section emphasize how important it is for writing instructors not to make assumptions about students but to challenge them to thrive and to help them build the skills and support networks that they need to do so.

Though each section of the text is thematically organized, one of the strengths of the collection is the way that chapters from each section interweave with each other to emphasize a set of common themes: the importance of reading and writing instructors integrating scholarly engagement into their pedagogy (and vice versa), the need to provide flexibility and rigorous support to students, and the centrality of joy and compassion to the creation of effective teaching. The scholarship included in the volume also strives to demonstrate the principles it lays out for the classroom within its own writing: authors not only foreground their own race-, class-, gender-, and sexuality-based contexts; they also integrate the discourse that springs from those contexts into the work of their writing, calling readers’ attention to the fact that notions of “standard English” reproduce hierarchies of oppression. They provide examples of assignments rooted in the theoretical interventions they expound.

They demonstrate a commitment to equity and justice even as they argue for those values. Though the voices of up-and-coming scholars and teachers are not specifically highlighted, the volume successfully centers the experiences and contributions of students: student voices are integrated into each section, reminding readers that teaching is about learning and co-creating as much as it is about sharing expertise.

Ultimately, this collection effectively encourages reading and writing instructors to integrate scholarship, pedagogy, and service in the quest to educate students and build stronger and more democratic communities. As Leah Mc-Neir's address to new English teachers puts it, "above all else, strive to encourage a passion for learning, open-mindedness, and exploration in your students and use your course's content as a tool for this aim" (285). This volume offers readers a timely and essential toolkit for putting that set of goals into action.

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### **Work Cited**

Coleman, Taiyon J., et al. "The Risky Business of Engaging Racial Equity in Writing Instruction: A Tragedy in Five Acts." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2016, pp. 347–370.