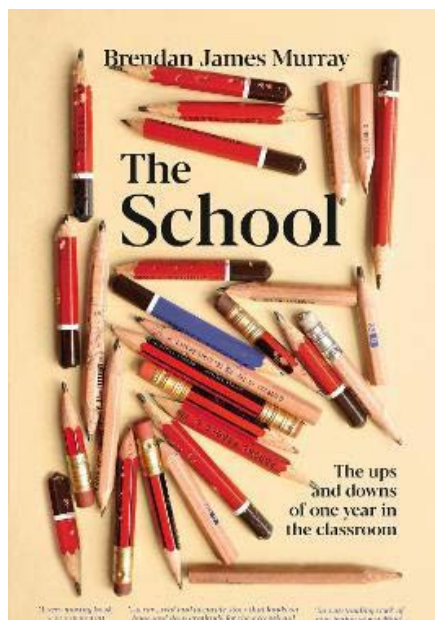


# Reviews

## The School: The Ups and Downs of One Year in the Classroom

Murray, Brendan James (2021). *The School: The Ups and Downs of One Year in the Classroom*. Sydney, Pan Macmillan.



ISBN: 9781760982430

*Reviewed by Margaret Simkin, Head of Library at The Hamilton and Alexandra College.*

Murray condenses the experiences of his teaching career into 399 pages. There are four sections: Term One: The end of Summer; Term 2: Autumn; Term 3: Winter and Term 4: Spring. Each season shares events from his classrooms over ten years of teaching at “Seadale”, the school he attended himself and where he still teaches English and Literature. The students to whom he refers are based on real students, but their privacy is maintained.

I purchased this book for our Teacher Reference section after hearing Brandan speak on ABC’s The Drum in Term 1 this year. His views on our profession were thoughtful and resonated with me. It is the first book from our collection that has led another teacher to immediately buy a copy as ours was on loan. This teacher then quoted a paragraph in our Monday whole staff briefing the next week.

Murray refers to the issues that affect us all: ATAR, NAPLAN, class size, limitations on help for students who learn differently from their peers. His delivery does not labour the point. For example: “Building lifelong learners is about sparking passion and curiosity, not anesthetising teenagers by outlining the pitfalls of “all of the above” questions on multiple choice test (Murray 2021, p.116)”.

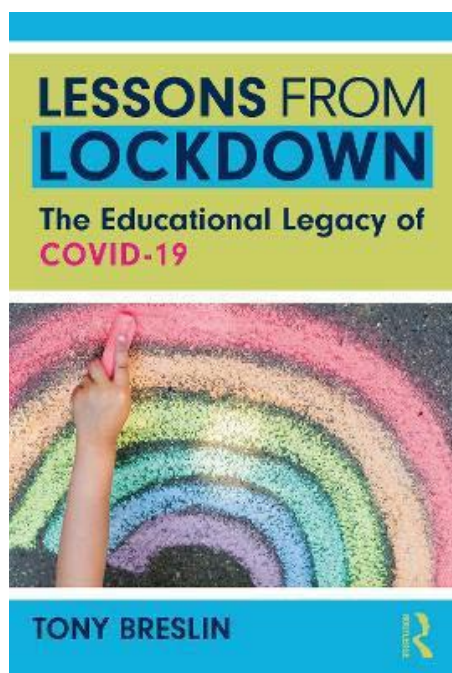
The students he references are sprinkled through the book, and we learn their backstories as the year unfolds. The book culminates in the end of Year 12 final event.

Murray acknowledges the good and the bad; strong leadership and its positive impact on teachers; striving students, those from broken homes, and those who conquer illness and personal issues. He aptly sums up his experience. “So all I can do is never take this job for granted. For me, it’s the best there is (Murray 2021, p.395).”

This work enables self-reflection on practice, experiences and why we all do what we do. The characters are well rounded and represent the range of young people we have all encountered. I highly recommend it as a worthwhile read.

# Lessons from Lockdown: The Educational Legacy of Covid-19

Breslin, Tony (2021). *Lessons from Lockdown: The Educational Legacy of Covid-19*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge.



ISBN: 9870367639266 (Hbk)

9870367639297 (Pbk)

9871003121343 (Ebk)

*Reviewed by Rosemary Abbott, Synergy Reviews Editor*

Dr Tony Breslin has a wealth of knowledge and experience in education, both as a practitioner and an examiner. His expertise in the areas of social curriculum, professional and vocational education, community engagement and lifelong learning ensures *Lessons from Lockdown* is a book of great depth, despite it being written over a very short period.

The book aims to capture the essence of schooling in lockdown, considers the broad educational issues (some of which were problematic pre-pandemic) and offers concrete recommendations at the end of each chapter. The inherently social nature of schooling provides a context for discussing lost learning, the emotional cost to students and teachers and the negative impacts on well being. The critical areas of curriculum and assessment are discussed, with a UK focus. The interconnected nature of education, economics and inequality is highlighted.

Breslin views the road into the pandemic as being more predictable than the road out, given the complex and changing reasons for government actions for post pandemic policy: economics, vaccines, spikes in case numbers in the UK and beyond. In his view, the lessons learned “about how schooling systems react to the announcement of lockdown needs to be captured and shared” (p. 17). Recognising the model of learning during lockdown not as blended but as “emergency, technologically enabled learning” (Preston, p. 165), potentially provides possibilities for transformation. In looking at parent engagement and the experiences of learning at home, Breslin highlights the value of empathy between parents and teachers and of giving parents more visibility in their children’s’ learning.

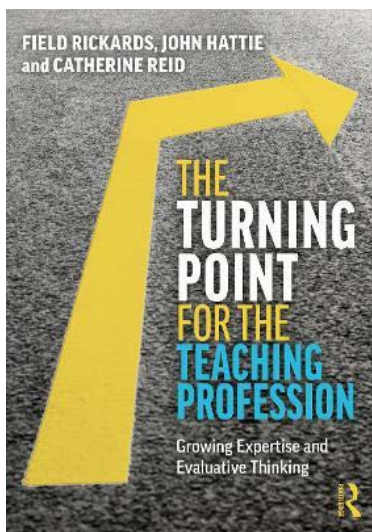
The final chapter, *Next Steps* lists 6 specific items for future action centred on wellbeing, inclusivity and new relationships between stakeholders. Breslin believes this is the way to have better learning and better preparation for uncertainty.

Breslin describes the book as part ethnographic, part journalistic and part research study. Its engaging narrative style gives voice to those participating in the research which was undertaken over a very short period (June, July and August 2020) and focused on inclusivity and investigation, with 10 focus groups, 16 face-to-face interviews and extended phone interviews. The reference list is extensive and wide ranging.

Breslin has written the book for a wide audience, including educational professionals and policy makers, parents and community leaders. The focus is very much on the UK but the experiences detailed are likely to resonate with teachers, educational professionals and parents across the globe. The book is detailed but well structured and very readable.

## Turning Point for the Teaching Profession: Growing Expertise and Evaluative Thinking

**Rickards, Field, Hattie, John & Reid, Catherine (2021). *Turning Point for the Teaching Profession: Growing Expertise and Evaluative Thinking*. London, Routledge.**



**ISBN: 9780367531850 (Hb)**

**9780367531867 (Pb)**

**9781003080831 (Eb)**

*Reviewed by Rosemary Abbott, Synergy Reviews Editor*

In their book, *Turning Point for the Teaching Profession*, Field Rickards, John Hattie and Catherine Reid also focus on learning and teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Their view is that this major disruption has highlighted the “incredible creativity and versatility” of teachers (p. vii). It is essential that this is captured when schools are back to ‘normal’. It is vital, at this juncture, to focus on the teaching profession and “ask some critical questions about its purpose, its base of expertise and its future (p. vii)

Part 1 of the book identifies why the teaching profession is at a turning point. It considers models of teaching over time and is clear that new models are needed. In the opinion of the authors, “expert teachers drive change” (p. 4) and so their role will be pivotal.

Part 2 details the notion of teacher expertise and how this concept has shifted over time. The expertise of teachers is posited as the most important factor in successful schooling and schools must capitalise on this. The elements of expertise are presented as “teacher thinking, decision-making, intervention and evaluation” (p. 30) and are discussed in detail. The authors believe that expert teachers are able to make greater contributions to learning than experienced teachers. Evidence is provided by the research on Visible Learning. The title of the final chapter in Part 2 describes evaluative thinking as “The Essence of the Teaching Profession” (p. 62). Five skills are presented and what is made possible through evaluative thinking is detailed.

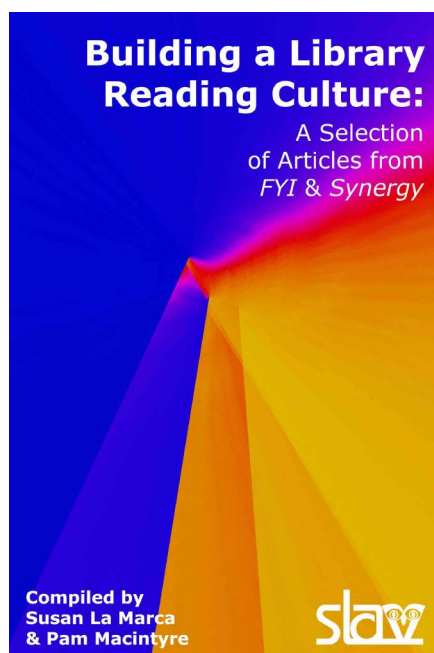
Part 3 presents the attributes needed for teaching to be “valued as a true profession” (p. 77). It considers evaluative thinking in other professions and why it is essential to the view of teaching as a profession and not a craft.

The authors sum this up well by stating that “teaching must be positioned as a collaborative, clinical-practice profession in which expertise in evaluative thinking is essential” (p. 90). This perfectly encapsulates the argument running through the book.

This detailed but very readable book is written by authors well known and highly regarded by educators. It includes a wide range of discussion and evidence of critical importance to what happens to the teaching profession after the disruptions of the pandemic. The diagrams are clear and useful. The reference list is extensive and the book is well-indexed. It will be of interest to teachers, school leaders, teacher educators and, indeed, anyone who is interested in the complex role of the teacher now and into the future.

## Building a Reading Culture: A Selection of Articles from FYI & Synergy

***Building a Reading Culture: A Selection of Articles from FYI & Synergy (2021). Compiled by Susan La Marca & Pam Macintyre***



ISBN: 9780909978044 (eBook)

ISBN: 9780909978037 Building a Reading Culture: Practice (Print)

ISBN: 978090997837 Print + eBook (2 files PDF & ePub)

Available from: <https://slav.org.au/Store>

*Reviewed by Liz Derouet, former Lecturer in Teacher Librarianship, Charles Sturt University*

The importance of recreational reading for our young people has become an increasingly popular topic amongst teacher librarians as more research is published. It cannot be denied that reading has many academic, personal and social benefits for all ages. Although all teacher librarians and educators are most probably aware of these, many do not have access to the wealth of research in one place. This new publication, a selection of articles published over a number of years by the School Library

Association of Victoria, provides this. One of the many aspects of the role of the teacher librarian (TL) is to promote literature and reading for pleasure. This book provides a wealth of research and ideas for anyone working in the world of reading for young people. Most importantly, it enables professionals to speak with authority on the topic.

The book is divided into three sections: Research and Reflections, Practice, and Organisations. Each article begins with the original publication date and the journal in which it appeared.

**Research and Reflections** includes sixteen articles by well-known researchers in their fields, including Manuel and Cater and Margaret Merga, go to authors for this reviewer when in need of

solid evidence. The first article was first published in 2009. Some might say this is dated, but *The book is dead – long live the book* by Dr Sherman Young is a seminal piece of work looking at the emergence of reading before and after the introduction of the internet. This is thought provoking and would be an appropriate article to read for a professional conversation amongst teaching and reading professionals. Historical perspectives are also considered in Manuel and Carter's *Current and historical perspectives on Australian teenagers' reading practices and preferences*, a must read for all for understanding teen reading behaviour. This article provides valuable information that will inform the practice of secondary teacher librarians, public librarians, booksellers, English teachers, and others involved in teens and their reading. Another important aspect covered is breaking down the myths about reading, such as boys preferring to read non-fiction instead of fiction. Merga busts this myth and many others in her article *Myths about children, teenagers, books and reading*, supported with evidence. This reviewer was quite taken aback when a bookseller announced this myth at a conference some years ago, all the more reason for these articles to be read by a wide audience. Knowing the what, why and how helps professionals put the right book in the hand of others. Other topics covered in this section include new media, formats, gender and the representation of groups within our society in literature and collections.

There are 24 articles in the **Practice** section, packed with, as the name suggests, practical ideas for putting in place the research. These articles vary in length and can be dipped in and out of depending on the readers' circumstances and need. For instance, Agnes Nieuwenhuizen's tips from 2008 offers a range of ideas to promote and encourage reading in a relatively short read of two pages while Nicky Sulter's article reports on creating book trailers as part of an international research project of boys' education from the International Boys' Schools Coalition. Topics include, but are not limited to, creating a reading culture in schools, e-Readers, read alouds, literature festivals, and reading practices and promotion for boys and girls. The third section, **Organisations**, covers local and international groups and organisations in the field of children's and young adult literature.

This volume covers a huge range of reading topics and types, from fiction to non-fiction, a variety of formats, eBooks and summer reading. The research included is reliable and comes from many well-known and well respected academic and practitioner authors. Whilst it is published by the School Library Association of Victoria, it is deserving of a wide audience amongst all professionals working with and for young people to promote recreational reading, including teachers, booksellers, public librarians and parents.

# At a Glance

**Brief listings, with both a local and global focus.**

## National Literacy Trust (UK)

Research Report, [\*The Role of Audiobooks to Engage Reluctant Readers and Underrepresented Children and Young People.\*](#)

[\*News Literacy Network: Find the Right Fake News and Critical Literacy Teaching Resources\*](#)

## Further on Fake News

The following article is available for purchase from Taylor & Frances; [\*Fake News Detection and Social Media Trust\*](#)

American Library Association. [\*Teaching About Fake News\*](#) published by the Association of College and Research Libraries is available for purchase from the ALA store

(Note: the two above items will be reviewed in the next issue of Synergy. Please let me know if you read either as additional input is always of value)

## Association of American School Libraries

[\*School Library Research\*](#). Scholarly refereed research journal

Covers research on school library programs, including learning and teaching and emerging issues for the school library profession

## ASCD

Tomlinson, Carol Ann. [\*So each may soar: The Principles and Practice of Learner-Centered Classrooms\*](#). June 2021

Carol Ann Tomlinson is well known for her writing on differentiation in the classroom. In this book she focuses on teachers' critical role in ensuring best possible student learning through their expertise and capacity for change. Strategies are described in detail; imaginative curriculum, support from school leaders, providing experiences that ensure the development of each and every student. Useful examples are given.

Westman, Lisa. [\*Teaching with Empathy: How to Transform Your Practice by Understanding Your Learners\*](#). Aug 2021

This book describes a crisis in empathy. It considers empathy in the context of curriculum design, assessment, classroom practice and equity. It concludes with a chapter containing steps to becoming a more empathetic educator. An accompanying study guide is available.

In addition to the books published by ASCD, there are numerous articles, blogs and webinars available. The lists of these resources are searchable with multiple filters including content type, topics and year levels

### **Australian Council for Educational Leaders**

**[ACEL Resources in Action 2021: Challenge and Invigorate Your Thinking into Practice](#)**  
Practical resources for educators

### **[National and State Libraries Australasia Strategic Plan 2020-2023](#)**

The NSLA is the peak body for state and territory libraries and seeks to provide “better collections, solutions and customer experiences through collaboration”.

### **[Taylor & Francis Professional Education Catalogue June 2021](#)**

Now for something slightly off topic. You may have already seen these virtual library tours, but if you haven't I hope you enjoy them:

**<http://www.ilovelibraries.org/article/take-virtual-tours-these-stunning-libraries>**

**<https://parsippanylibrary.org/virtual-tours-of-world-famous-libraries/>**

*Contributions to this section are warmly welcomed, so please let us know if you discover a wonderful new resource you wish to share with your colleagues. Your review only needs to be a couple of lines.*

**Rosemary Abbott**

Synergy Reviews Editor

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