



What the Best College Teachers Do

A “Reading Club” for New, First-Time Faculty

Periodic, informal meetings to discuss concepts from the award-winning book by Ken Bain

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What the Best College Teachers Do

By Ken Bain, Harvard University Press, 2004, 207 p.

How it Works: You commit to attending five weekly, 1-hour, lunchtime discussions (bring your lunch) and reading 2-3 chapters of the book before each session. OSET provides you a copy of the book to keep. If you start the reading club and are unable to complete all five sessions we ask that you return the book. Sessions will begin during the week of September 8 and the day and time will be determined by all participants’ availability. Participation is limited to 12 people.

Who Should Participate: Anyone is welcome, but OSET particularly encourages new, first-time faculty (tenure-track, lecturer, or part time) who will be teaching undergraduate classes.

How do I Find Out More About This Opportunity? Please contact Gary Smith at the Office of Support for Effective Teaching (OSET) by phone (277-2297) or email (gsmith@unm.edu).

How do I Sign Up? Either fill-out and return the form below (send by campus mail to OSET – Provost Office, MSC05 3400) or email the same information to Gary Smith (gsmith@unm.edu).

Yes! Please sign me up for the “What the Best College Teachers Do” reading club.

I commit to attending the 5 lunchtime discussion sessions; otherwise I will return the copy of the book given to me from OSET.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Department: _____ Daytime phone: _____

Title: _____

Why I want to participate:

More About *What the Best College Teachers Do*

From the flap:

“What makes a great teacher great? Who are the professors students remember long after graduation? This book, the conclusion of a 15-year study of nearly one hundred college teachers in a wide variety of fields and universities, offers valuable answers for all educators.

“The short answer is—it’s not what teachers do, it’s what they understand. Lesson plans and lecture notes matter less than the special way teachers comprehend the subject and value of human learning. Whether historians or physicists, in El Paso or St. Paul, the best teachers know their subjects inside and out—but they also know how to engage and challenge students and to provoke impassioned responses. Most of all, they believe two things fervently: that teaching matters and that students can learn.

“In stories both humorous and touching, Ken Bain describes examples of ingenuity and compassion, of students’ discoveries of new ideas and the depth of their own potential. *What the Best College Teachers Do* is a treasure trove of insight and inspiration for first-year teachers and seasoned educators alike.”

Editorial Reviews from Amazon.com:

From *Publishers Weekly*

“Bain’s sound and scholarly yet exuberant promotion of America’s “best college teachers” abounds with jaunty anecdotes and inspiring opinions that make student-centered instruction look not only infectious, but downright imperative. Teachers may enjoy the book’s plummy examples from their peers’ interdisciplinary curricula—such as the Harvard chemistry professor whose “lesson on polymers becomes the story of how the development of nylons influenced the outcome of World War II” or the U Penn art professor whose computer game allows students to determine the authenticity of a questionable Rembrandt. Bain’s most compelling arguments, however, concern the quirks and motivations of today’s college students. Though he acknowledges nationwide trends toward grade inflation, he invokes a 1990 study that suggests students are most driven by “high demands” and prefer “plentiful opportunities to revise and improve their work before it receives a grade.” Likewise, the book argues that, even in the cutthroat climate of today’s competitive colleges, students thrive best in cooperative classrooms. The best teachers, Bain avers, understand and exceed such expectations, and use them to create “natural critical learning environments.” Easy-to-follow headings—such as “Start with the Students Rather Than the Discipline”—help readers learn to create such environments, too. Inspiring though this slender book will be for college teachers at all levels, it may also delight the general reader with nostalgic reminders of their finest classroom experiences.”

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From *Booklist*

“With the strong conviction that good teaching can be learned, and after 15 years of observing teachers in action, Bain undertook an exploration of the essentials of effective teaching. The result is an insightful look at what makes a great teacher, based on a study of teachers from a cross section of disciplines from medical-school faculties to undergraduate departments. After interviewing students and colleagues, observing classrooms and laboratories, and examining course materials from syllabi to lecture notes, Bain concludes that the quality of teaching is measured not by whether students pass exams but whether they retain the material to such an extent that it influences their thoughts and actions. Bain focuses on what the best teachers know and understand about their subject matter as well as the learning process; how they prepare; what they expect of their students; how they treat students; and how they evaluate student progress. Although this book is aimed at teachers, it is a thoughtful and valuable resource for students and parents as well.”

Vanessa Bush. Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved