Book Club Review Performing Science: Teaching Chemistry, Physics and Biology Through Drama by Ian Abrahams

**Things we liked**

The way this book is organized it is very accessible despite being written for the UK and not BC’s curriculum. It is organized by scientific discipline as well as by age so it’s easy to look up your topic and see if there is a relevant activity listed in the book.

The instructions are set out step-by-step to make the process clearer for the teacher and the students.

There are photographs of students participating in the activity so it’s easier to understand how the activity will look in your own classroom. Suitable locations, required resources, common misconceptions, hazards to watch out for, and differentiation strategies are listed for each activity so teachers require less organization to get prepped for an activity.

Warm up activities are listed for teachers who might not have experience leading theatrical classes.

We thought the conclusion on page 121 perfectly summarized the need for theatre in science when it discusses science and arts as two cultures that can combine to support learning even if they are frequently viewed very separate entities. On page 123 there is an excellent infographic explaining the cognitive dissonance taking place in the experiential space and the drama space between the learner’s world of knowing and the scientist’s world of knowing.

**Things we didn’t like**

No real complaints other than the lack of colour in the book. This is not a book for primary teacher but it doesn’t advertise itself as such so no real problem there.

**Things to consider**

The author uses some drama terminology that might be unfamiliar to science specialists but contributor Bidi Iredale wrote up some explanations and advice for non-drama specialists using drama in their teaching practice.

Each session starts with a title followed by its aims and outcomes- while not BC curriculum it is easy to make your own links to Core Competencies, Big Ideas, Learning Standards and Content.

The activities are not typically meant to take up an entire 60 minute class block so we wouldn’t recommend them in sub plans but these activities would be exceptionally good for student teachers or something to break up double blocks.

For some activities that require scripts or worksheets you need to sign up for the free online resources, this was done to cut printing costs and keep the book uncluttered. This can be inconvenient for some but we liked it because the digital formats were easier to adapt for individual classrooms.
Who could make use of this book:
Absolutely anyone who teaches middle school or high school science could use this.

Summary

This book is meant to bring engagement and understanding for students who may struggle with the more traditional approaches to science education. While drama and roleplay cannot and should not replace all the traditional approaches to teaching science is can be an excellent support for those who struggle with so much of the direct learning and structured experimentation approaches to STEM education. This book will help inform teachers when a theatrical approach could be appropriate, who will find it helpful, and how to pull it off without compromising the learning objective tied to set content and concepts. It encourages innovation and a new perspective to the possibilities in the science classroom

Book Club Review Exploring Curriculum By Lynn Fels and George Belliveau

Things we liked
Page 56 has an excellent diagram showing what fits under the umbrella of performative inquiry

The section on designing Role Drama is probably the most useful an accessible section of the book for non-performance specialist teachers. Page 184 has a good illustration of a mind map to demonstrate beginning process in an example about the politics of water. On page 197-202 there is a chart to aid the reader in seeing how the initial idea about designing a role drama on water diverged in to two different role dramas (Making a Movies, and Municipal Election.)

Things we didn’t like
It can be a bit of a jarring read going in and out from prose to poetry, academic to artistic which can sometimes pull the reader out of the

Things to consider
Some interest and experience with theatre would be helpful as the authors do use a lot of performance jargon. The jargon is explained as it is used (for the most part) but the frequency and variety of performance specific vocabulary may make the book somewhat more of a challenge for teachers without this foundations in performance education.

Who could make use of this book:
This book would be suited best for someone who wants to take a deeper look as to the academic possibilities springing from performance.

Summary
Performative inquiry (teaching curriculum through independent and guided drama practice) offers exceptional opportunities for differentiation and hands-on engagement. Performative inquiry embraces performance as an action-space of exploration, reflection and learning.

*Performative inquiry offers educators and researchers the opportunity to make visible political, social, economic, cultural, communal, and individual injustices, conventions, expectations, presumptions, ambitions, hidden motivations, the unspoken, the not yet known.*

*Performative inquiry may serve as an interruption, illuminating the complexities of an issue, a catalyst for personal agency and collective action.*

*Performative inquiry invites us to be aware of the scripts and environments, which we perform and perform us.*

*Performative inquiry invites us to reflect on what is, what has been, and what has yet to be imagined.*

*Performative inquiry writes itself through performance or through performative writing, in ways that open us to new possibilities, new ways of being.*

The book was written by and SFU professor who is familiar with BC culture and curriculum so the guidance offered in the book is relevant to SD62 teachers. Dr. Fels and Dr. Belliveau build a solid framework for using performative inquiry, present role dramas that teachers can use (or adapt) to their classrooms, and the final part of the book is about evaluation and creation of role dramas (both student and teacher led.)