

# BECOMING AN EXCEPTIONAL TEACHER



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A suggested list  
of resources for those (like me) hoping  
to be exceptional teachers.

As I finish up my final year in the teacher preparation program at Michigan State University, and move towards graduation, my teaching internship, and my life as a teacher, it is important for me to think about the bodies of knowledge I will need to be successful. I have learned a lot in my undergraduate career and even more working on my masters in educational technology, but there is more I will need to know to truly be an expert teacher. While this list is not all-inclusive or faultless, it is a look at the type of things I will need to know, and some places I can go to find information and inspiration. Some of the sources I currently use or have previously read, and others I plan to experience in the future. There are twelve sections which suggest the types of things I will need to know to be an exceptional teacher, each including several books, website, movies, or blogs, that can help me to learn.

- Greatest Hits - What's New? - State of Schools -
- Management Master - Know it All - Language Arts Legend -
- Books to Make Kids Love Books - Classroom of Creativity -
- Tech Teacher - Reach Every Single Child -
- Understand Students - It's a Kid's World -

## Greatest Hits

There are several names and titles that are famous in the world of education. "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed," "Savage Inequalities," and on the list goes. Many have been a part of my undergraduate reading lists. The two included below are books I have heard about time and time again and never had the opportunity to read. These books give teachers a shared understanding, a sense of the history of educational literature, and are a source of insight and empirically tested strategies and suggestions, they are greatest hits.

### [Looking In Classrooms](#), by Thomas L. Good and Jere E. Brophy

This book includes strategies and suggestions for effective teaching methods. It is based on research in classrooms, and focuses on motivation, expectations, motivation, and more. According to the back cover, it is "widely considered to be the most comprehensive and authoritative source available on effective teaching."

### [Democracy and Education](#), by John Dewey

This book describes Dewey's theory of education. He is one of the greats in educational philosophy and this book will help me to get an understanding of this ideas and why they are so important.

## What's New?

It is important for me, as a teacher, to be aware of what is going on in the world of education and to stay up to date on trends, research, problems and solution. The websites listed below are news and reports services that can inform me of what's new.

### <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/education/>

This site has national news stories dealing with education. It also has an RSS feed and so can be brought to my aggregator daily. This is not something I will read once, but rather something that should be checked regularly.

### <http://www.educationreport.org/pubs/mer/cover.aspx>

Updates on educational issues in the state of Michigan are available on this site. Because I plan to teach in Michigan it is important I can access this information.

# State of School

As a teacher I will always need information and inspiration. The turnover rate of teachers is high, and part of what will keep me dedicated to teaching is support and challenges. These resources provide that by giving information about what it is like for other teachers and in other schools, and suggestions for improving my practice. They will help me keep perspective on the state of school.

## **The Game of School Why We All Play It, How It Hurts Kids, and What It Will Take to Change, By Robert L. Fried**

This book was recommended to me by one of my favorite professors. The publisher's description does better than I can, Students play it, teachers perpetuate it, parents condone it, principals endorse it, and governments legislate it. The "game of school" is that familiar scenario where students' natural curiosity and desire to learn are replaced with a frantic rush (or a compliant shrug) to do the work, please the teacher, and get the grades."

## **Educating Esme: Diary of a Teacher's First Year By Esmé Raji Codell**

This book is a diary written by a first year teacher. It is recommended on many lists of books for teachers, and is funny and truthful.

## **<http://www.edutopia.org/>**

This website and magazine are created by the George Lucas Educational Foundation. They include information about innovative schools, tips for teaching with technology, organizing you classroom, and even what to pack for lunch.

# Management Master

Life can be miserable for teachers who lack control, respect, and a true community of learners in the classroom. I hope to have a positive atmosphere in my classroom that does not rely on bribes, sticker charts, or three strikes. These books give ideas for managing a classroom that do not rely on extrinsic motivation, and can help me be a management master.

## **Teaching With Love & Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom, by Jim Fay and David Funk**

This is a common book used by teachers dealing with classroom management. The management suggestions are all based on using love and logic.

## **Choice Theory in the Classroom, by William Glasser**

A teacher whose classroom I have visited, and whose management style works like nothing I have ever seen, bases a lot of her management decisions on this book. It is based on the idea that many problems stem from the fact that we are forced to do things we don't want to do.

# Know it All

Elementary teachers need to know a lot of stuff! I will have to teach social studies, science, math, language arts, and more. It is important that I have great content knowledge in all of these subjects, besides just knowing how to teach them. These resources will help me know it all.

## [A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present](#), By Howard Zinn

Every teacher should have a strong understanding of US history and this book can provide that understanding,

## [Science Encyclopedia](#), By Usborne

Lots of facts and explanations for scientific information can be found in this book.

## [The Elements of Style Illustrated](#), by William Strunk, E. B. White, Maira Kalman

This book includes all of the rules of grammar and style used in writing,

## [Wikipedia](#)

This wiki has a lot of information about nearly everything.

# Books To Make Kids Love Books

One of my most important roles as an elementary school teacher is fostering a love of learning and a love of reading. If kids are never exposed to the right kind of books they will believe reading is boring or hard. These two books I will read to every class I ever have. These are books to make kids love books.

## [Zen Shorts](#), by Jon J. Muth

This book would be great for any age students to read or have read to them. It is about a very wise panda bear that draws on Zen philosophies and teaching to tell stories to some children. It is magical and students love it.

## [A Barrel of Laughs a Vale of Tears](#), By Jules Feifer

This is my favorite book of all time. It is about a prince on a quest, but that description doesn't even begin to do it justice. It is imaginative and adventuresome. It really helped me to love reading and see the endless possibilities of reading and writing. This book is a chapter book and would be best for older grades.

# Classroom of Creativity

It is especially important to me to be a teacher who inspires creativity in my classroom. Sometimes the daily activities, standards and tests make difficult to find ways to teach outside the box, and encourage students to think outside the box. I will need resources to help me and those listed below will help me create a classroom of creativity.

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/>

This website includes resources for using the arts in the classroom. It has links, lessons, standards, and more. It is a great source of inspiration and motivation for using the arts in the classroom.

**[The Everyday Work of Art: Awakening the Extraordinary in Your Daily Life, By Eric Booth](#)**

Booth refers to the “nouns” of art, which widens the definition. I saw him speak and he promotes artistic experiences in the classroom, or those where students can pour themselves into their work because they truly care about the finished product. This book helps a reader to think about ways to bring these experiences to many situations including the classroom.

# The Tech Teacher

One of the most important goals I have for myself as a teacher is to be able to effectively integrate technology in my classroom. The possibilities are endless when it comes to technology, and these blogs will help me keep up as the tech teacher.

**[2¢ Worth, http://davidwarlick.com/2cents/](http://davidwarlick.com/2cents/)**

This blog is written by a well-established technology in teaching expert. He gives great ideas, how-tos, and opinions about using technology in the classroom. It is a great collection of resources as he links to other experts, classroom examples, etc.

**[Cool Cat Teacher Blog, http://coolcatteacher.blogspot.com/](http://coolcatteacher.blogspot.com/)**

About her blog, teacher Vikki Davis says, “teaching content with new tools, enthusiasm, and the belief that teaching is a noble calling.” The blog includes a lot of great ideas she has actually done in her classroom. You can learn from her mistakes and successes by reading this blog.

# Reach Every Single Child

In my future classes I am sure to have every different kind of child. Diversity means more than just cultural differences, and in a classroom includes gifted students, students with special needs or exceptionalities, etc. The following books will help me reach every single child.

## [Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom: Strategies and Techniques Every Teacher Can Use to Meet the Academic Needs of the Gifted and Talented](#), by Susan Winebrenner and Pamela Espeland

This is a guidebook for teachers to help them meet the needs of gifted students. It is highly recommended and referred to as "the orange bible." Helping students who are gifted is just as important as catching up those who are behind,

## [Understanding Special Education: A Helpful Handbook For Classroom Teachers](#), by Cynthia M. Stowe

This book gives regular-ed teachers a lot of information about special education and prepares them for the students who may be included in their classes. I have little experience with special education and know I will need to be prepared to help these students.

## [Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education](#), by Sonia Nieto and Patricia Bode

This book describes why a multicultural education is important and suggests ways of embracing the diversities within a classroom.

# Understand Students

It is not enough to understand how kids think and learn. As a teacher, I will have to understand how students feel. Making and maintaining friendships and building relationships are an important part of school life. The books listed below will help me understand students.

## [Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ](#), by Daniel Goleman

This book is not meant for teachers, but comes from a psychology point of view. It helps with emotional situations in professional and personal situations. It can help me have conversations with my students, and give them insight about how to solve conflicts with each other.

## [You Can't Say You Can't Play](#), by Vivian Gussin Paley

This teacher tells a story about the social lives and skills of her students. She makes the title a rule in her class, and tests it out in other classes. The book helps deal with issues of loneliness and how to keep students from feeling left out.

# It's A Kid's World

Being a teacher means spending most of every day with children. It is important to be able to relate to them, to pay attention to the things they like. The resources below will help me have conversations with my students about the things they care about, because for teachers, it's a kid's world.

## **The Students**

One way to learn about what kids are doing is to listen to them, talk with them, and learn from them. If they are talking about a book, read it, if they all love a movie, see it. If they are all humming a song, find out that sings it.

<http://kidstvmovies.about.com/>

This site includes upcoming movies and TV shows for kids. It gives ratings and reviews about the shows kids are watching. It could serve like cliffnotes, you can talk about a movie a little bit with the kids without having to see it.

<http://www.urbandictionary.com/>

I feel silly adding this one. I shouldn't be out of it on popular culture and slang yet, should I? The second graders I see once a week sometimes say things I am not quite sure of. This is a site to remember when the kids say things I can't understand.