

Book Review: *Developing Inviting Schools: A Beneficial Framework for Teaching and Leading* by William W. Purkey, John M. Novak and Joan R. Fretz

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Abstract

This book describes in detail the conceptual basis for Invitational Education as well as how it has been practiced in a variety of schools. The foundations of Invitational Education included a democratic ethos, the perceptual tradition and self-concept theory. If democracy is to survive and thrive in America it needs to flourish in schools and the authors make a strong case for this foundation.

Keywords: holistic education, invitational education, conflict-concern, confer, consult, confront, combat, conciliation

This book is the culmination of decades of work. William Purkey's *Inviting School Success: A Self-Concept Approach to Teaching and Learning* was first published in 1984. It presented a humanistic approach to education based on how individuals working in schools could be more invitational. Since then more than 400 schools around the world have adopted this approach. This book describes in detail the conceptual basis for Invitational Education as well as how it has been practiced in a variety of schools. The authors address issues that were not prevalent in 1984 such as school shootings and COVID-19. The fifth chapter entitled, "Inviting in the Rain", describes how Invitational Education is relevant in a violent society and is not limited to schools where students and teachers feel safe. Six C's are presented to address conflict-concern, confer, consult, confront, combat and conciliation.

Invitational Education is based on five assumptions:

1. People are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly.
2. Educating should be a collaborative, cooperative activity.

3. The process is the product in the making
4. People possess untapped potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavor.
5. The potential can best be realized by places, policies, programs and processes specifically designed to invite development and by people who are intentionally inviting with themselves and others personally and professionally. (p. 9)

Several of these assumptions are supported by the recent work of Bregman in *Humankind: A Hopeful History* who argues that people are basically good (cited on p. 62) This assumption with regard to young people is central to humanistic and holistic approaches to education.

The foundations of Invitational Education included a democratic ethos, the perceptual tradition and self-concept theory. If democracy is to survive and thrive in America it needs to flourish in schools and the authors make a strong case for this foundation. Although self-concept is important, some holistic educators focus on the place within the person that is free and unconditioned. This place has been called the soul, the divine spark, or Emerson's "infinite within"

which is in harmony with the universe (Kessler, 2000). It is the ultimate connection where humans feel they are part of the Whole. It is the place of love that King and Gandhi constantly referred to. For some this next step beyond self-concept is a bridge too far; Invitational Education provides an inspiring and hopeful vision for these educators. To facilitate self-concept the authors write about teachers who, “By their very presence, they have a subtle but profound impact on students’ self-concept” (p. 39). I have written about the critical importance of teacher presence in holistic education (Miller, 2019) and am also pleased to see that authors recommend mindfulness practices for teachers and students (p. 33).

At the end of each chapter are reflections and exercises to help the reader engage the material presented. The last chapter describes school districts in New Mexico and Kentucky that have developed system wide approaches to Invitational Education. The authors also describe schools in New York state as well as schools in Australia and Hong Kong that have adopted Invitational Education. Another strength of the book is the research that is cited throughout the book. One of the appendices focuses on the research as well.

I am confident this book will encourage more school districts and schools to consider adopting Invitational Education to address the challenges facing educators today.

References

- Kessler, R. (2000). *The soul of education*. ASCD.
Miller, J. (2019). *The holistic curriculum*. U of Toronto Press.

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John (Jack) P Miller, Professor University of Toronto and author of *The Holistic Curriculum*. He sits on the Advisory Board of the *Holistic Education Review*.