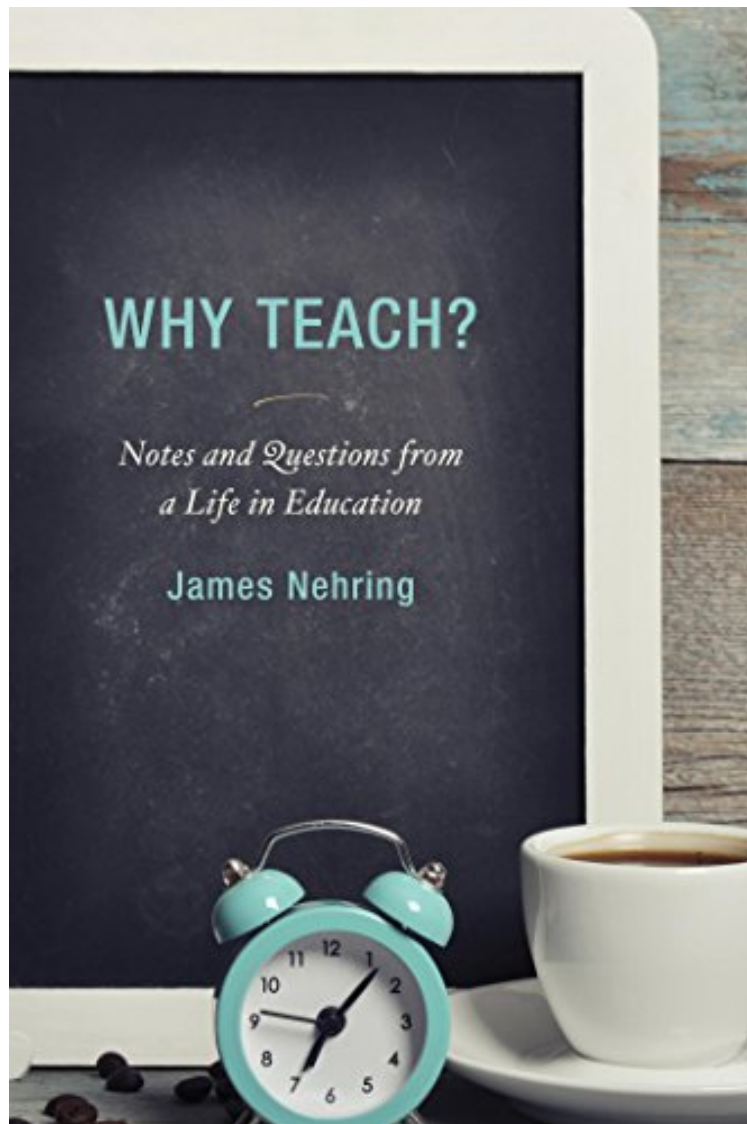


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Why Teach?: Notes and Questions from a Life in Education

James Nehring

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James Nehring : Why Teach?: Notes and Questions from a Life in Education before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why Teach?: Notes and Questions from a Life in Education:

One year out of college, James Nehring landed ldquo;accidentallyrdquo; in teaching and soon discovered his love for the profession. But he was surrounded by a school system consumed with order, efficiency, rules, and punishment. He

wanted to change the system. So began a quest that became a career. *Why Teach? Notes and Questions from a Life in Education* is a journey inside American education and a story of self-discovery. *Why Teach?* is the perfect introductory text for an aspiring teacher, a source of reflection for fellow educators, and a compelling insider critique of the system from pre-school to graduate school. In an age dominated by social science, *Why Teach?* makes the case for a humanistic approach to schooling.

James Nehering's most recent text, *Why Teach? Notes and Questions from a Life in Education* (2015), is a story-filled, retrospective book that chronicles the author's journey from stumbling into teaching to transforming educationally into an innovative change agent while serving in multiple roles: teacher, administrator, and higher education professor. As the reader, you are immediately drawn into the book by Nehering's short narratives filled with portraits of school and classroom experiences to which all educators can relate. The stages of teacher development and awakening to the challenges inherent in being an educator emerge through his stories. Whether the reader is a preservice teacher or a veteran educator with decades of experience, she can connect to Nehering's narrative. . . . This book would appeal to many types of educators (e.g., preservice teachers, beginning teachers, veteran teachers, mentors, instructional coaches, administrators, higher education faculty). For example, the book could be used as a (a) practical supplement to student teaching seminars, (b) textbook for masters' or doctoral classes focused on teacher development and/or change theory, or (c) support to PLC teams studying school context, curricular initiatives, and collaboration. Those working in public, private, or charter schools would also benefit from Nehering's insights. Almost certainly, any teacher would enjoy this book because it inspires and encourages contemplation. It causes readers to reflect on why they chose to teach and on the undulations of change they experience as part of that life journey. (Teachers College Record) James Nehering's *Why Teach? Notes and Questions from a Life in Education* is an inviting, personal narrative of the author's varied experience as a career educator. . . . By reading his thoughtful reflections on his experiences, we learn of challenges and rewards of each type of teaching environment. Nehering's book therefore offers something for educators at all stages of their professional lives. In an era when proponents of thoughtful change are often viewed with distrust if not outright hostility, Nehering subtly reasserts the integrity and ethics of an alternative mode of teaching. . . . Written in an accessible style laced with humor, James Nehering's *Why Teach?* makes a good choice for inquiring teachers at all levels of their careers, from fledgling education students to senior faculty. . . . [T]he book is valuable. (Schools: Studies in Education) More entertaining than a chronicle of someone's career in education has a right to be, Nehering's book is a page turner not only because of his engaging style but because it's peppered with thoughtful observations about what it means to teach well. (Alfie Kohn, author of *The Schools Our Children Deserve* and *Feel-Bad Education*) Combining insight, humor, and practical advice, *Why Teach?* is an inspiring story and a philosophical meditation — an adventure and a call to action that will challenge the mind and nourish the soul. (Linda Darling-Hammond, Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education, Stanford University) I read it once and sat back in awe. So I read it again. . . . As you read *Why Teach? Notes and Questions from a Life in Education*, I think you'll realize that we're witnessing a rebirth of some of the spirit that led both Jim and me into teaching and that helped us invent new ways to imagine how it could be reconfigured on behalf of both democracy and the simple humanity of young people. Reading it with others, as his post chapter queries might suggest, would surely be in keeping with the book's underlying message — being part of a community of learners is in itself a way to learn, and to uncover the thread underlying your life's path. (Debbie Meier, MacArthur Fellow, Co-chair, Coalition of Essential Schools, and member of the editorial board for the *Nation*, *Dissent*, and the *Harvard Education Letter*; from the Foreword) By now, the teaching memoir is a well-established genre, and one with multiple audiences. But Jim Nehering's *Why Teach?* offers a fresh twist: a life as a curriculum. By structuring his experiences into a series of lessons to be absorbed, reflected upon, and discussed, he makes a valuable contribution to the discourse of teaching and our understanding of the surprisingly serpentine paths a life in school can take, both inside and outside the classroom. (Jim Cullen, The Ethical Culture Fieldston School, New York, NY, and author of *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*) A well-documented journey of a life-long teacher. Both professional and personal. A good read for anyone thinking about entering the profession or wondering why people stay. (Katherine K. Merseeth, Senior Lecturer and Director of Teacher Education, Harvard University) *Why Teach?* is one of the most compelling books on education that I've read in years because the author takes us with him on a fascinating journey of more than 30 years in which he explores and slowly comes to understand what he rightly calls "the mystery of teaching." Part pilgrimage, part reflective manifesto, the book is written with a lovely sense of charm and humor, insight and irreverence. It's a wise book in the best tradition of Nehering's mentor, the late Ted Sizer, but I hope I'll be forgiven for the pleasure that I took in reading it mostly as a real good story — an ethical and intellectual adventure. (Jonathan Kozol, National Book Award winner and author of "Savage Inequalities") About the Author James Nehering is a career educator and the author of books and articles on schools and teaching. He is associate professor of Education at the University of Massachusetts Lowell and is the recipient of a Fulbright Award and a Brown University Alumni award for his contributions to teachers and teacher education." View and participate in Professor Nehering's

website and blog at www.jamesnehring.org.