In the Classroom 52

My 25 Book Recommendations for
Educators and Instructional Technologists

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Stan Skrabut: Thanks ever so much for joining me on this podcast. It certainly means a lot. I know you could be doing other things, you're probably doing other things, but you're still hanging out with me and I really do appreciate it. Well, this is a major episode because officially, we hit the one-year mark. This is the 52nd episode and one year, I can't believe it. I'm excited to see where the next year goes in my learning journey. I really appreciate you joining me on this journey as we continue to learn about new things and share ideas that I have learned in the past and even look at some ideas or some new things that I'll be exploring in the future. I really appreciate it.

This particular episode, we are going to take a deep dive into one of the best ways to improve your knowledge of a subject and that is reading. With reading, if you read three books on a subject, they say, you will know more than 95% of other people on the subject, but you would probably already know this because you read my book, *Read to Succeed*. If you haven't read *Read to Succeed*, I'd certainly encourage it. That'll be definitely in the show notes. One of the things that I advocate is that you should be setting a reading goal. It can be in terms of quantity or in terms of quality. Each year, I go ahead and set two reading goals.

One of the goals for 2020, I'm looking at reading 75 books. When I say read 75 books, I could probably read more, but for each book that I read, I actually write a book review. That slows me down a little bit, but also I read in terms of quality that I want to get out of my comfort zone and read other things. I participate in the Modern Mrs. Darcy reading challenge, and that's always been fun. It stretches me on the different things that I'll read. It definitely takes me out of my comfort zone. That's what I'm hoping to do here is take you out of your comfort zone and stretch you in terms of being an educator.

Thinking about instructional technology and even dealing with productivity. I have a bunch of books that I want to share with you that I think you should be reading. These are-- this first set happens to deal with just rethinking education. As I look at education, and after I've read these books, it's caused me to reconsider how we do some of the things that we do and wonder if there's not a better way to do it. The first book that I'm looking at is called *Old School, New School, No School: Recalibrating Higher Education.* What is needed to survive in today's world keeps rapidly changing. We need lifelong learners to cope with this constant change.

Unfortunately, most higher education institutes are teaching students as they have for decades and centuries. This method happens to be dominated by the lecture. We have certainly folks going out there and looking at problem-based learning and active learning methods. We need to continue to do that, but we have a considerable amount of courses in there focusing on the lecture. It's not suited well to a world that's rapidly changing. Learners have to figure out their own solutions based on their own research. This particular book was written by Deborah Snyder and John Duhring and this is what they stress in their book.

It'll cause you to rethink your approach to education. We need to create lifelong learners who are creative and resourceful as we enter this gig economy, that's going to be heavily influenced by artificial intelligence and robotics. Unfortunately, higher education is not agile enough to stay pace with this changing world. We need to change our education to one of creation rather than consumption. I definitely recommend this book. Next book, *Robot-Proof: Higher Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*. This concept of artificial intelligence is becoming more and more prominent. You hear about it more and more, how it's going to impact our world.

I've been listening at a number of conferences on presentations about artificial intelligence and what the impact is, and it's going to have an impact on higher education. We need to figure out what higher education can do to prepare for this. This book was written by Joseph Aoun, the president of Northeastern University. In *Robot-Proof*, he shared what his university is doing and what other universities should be doing to prepare for a change in our society and the workplace due to artificial intelligence. The next book I have listed is called *Digital Leadership: Changing Technology for Chain-Savvy School Leaders*.

This is one of the best books that I've read that I think every educator, administrator, and leader should read and was written by Eric Sheninger. He explains why educators and leaders should be directly involved in using and promoting the use of technology as a work-learning and communication tool. He talks about, in one example, and this was in chapter four, he talks about a superintendent, Lieutenant Colonel David Britten and his use of technology to lead out loud. I'm a fan of this because I have adopted this philosophy of work out loud and learning out loud and leading out loud is just a natural extension of this.

That I think everybody should be out there doing these type of things. Next book for you, *Why School? How Education Must Change When Learning and Information Are Everywhere*. This was written by Will Richardson. What he notice is he could not get a son to do schoolwork, but he watched in amazement as his son became a learning machine when he was learning Minecraft, that he not only used the program on his own but also tapped into networks that supported his learning and contributed to that learning. As a result, Richardson wrote this book. He questions the purpose of school as real learning happens anytime, anywhere with anyone we like.

A lot of the books from people I read often tie back from John Dewey and his ideas of education and Richardson tapped into that. This whole philosophy of learning is really about learning anytime, anywhere, with anyone and I think you would like to read that.

The next book is *One World Schoolhouse. A New Approach To Teaching and Learning.* This was written by Salman Khan. If you're familiar with Khan, you probably can tie it back to Khan Academy. Salman Khan is the one who developed Khan Academy. He did it as a way to help his niece understand some mathematical concept and then it just went crazy.

Khan focuses on four areas in his book and his development of Khan Academy, why he believes the current education model is broken, how Khan Academy has been successfully used in the real world and his vision of a one-room schoolhouse. He envisions a world where part of the school is through self-study and the rest is through active learning project. Like I said, I'm more of a fan of this because a lot of the stuff that we are teaching, we can look it up on the internet. Let's start preparing for students who are going to leave the classroom.

Rather than give these collected bundles of information and give it to them very cleanly, teach them how to use the internet to build their own knowledge. Like I said, I'm a fan that as educators we should be curating and guiding students through this information where learners can pace and decide for themselves what's necessary at that moment in time. This really requires all these books talk about restructuring this idea of education. This can be a little unnerving for some folks. Those are some books that I want to share on just rethinking education. My next category focus on teaching.

These are some books really dedicated on improving your practice as a educator, and how to teach better, how to design instruction better. The first one is *Classroom Advice For New Teachers: A Proactive Approach for Meeting the Daily Challenges of the Profession.* This is really geared-- well, I can't say it's geared necessarily for new teachers. Although, that's probably a big part of it, but I think experienced teachers can also benefit from it. It was written by Jeff Julian. I came upon this book because it was sitting on my desk or sitting on the table that we have in our office. It was actually written by one of the instructors at Jamestown Community College.

I got to meet him and what I found both he and his book are very compassionate and passionate about educating others. Absolutely, a wonderful book to read. What was fascinating is at the beginning of each chapter, there was quotes from students. That helped to really focus the book and the information was provided had this tie back to students. That's actually what it's really all about. The next book is called *Teaching Naked Techniques: A Practical Guide To Designing Better Classes.* It was written by José Antonio Bowen and Edward Watson.

If you use even a fraction of what's in this book, your courses will improve significantly. As somebody who is an education geek, I like reading about how to improve education. I couldn't put this book down. It contain all kinds of great research but provided a stripped-down strategy for improving learning. One of the quotes from the book is, "Most of our structures and systems are traditional and come from a time when we did not know a fraction of what we know about learning." If we go out and say, "Well, we're using research-based strategies," we need to do that because frankly, we're not.

This book helps to guide you in the right direction, and it's about designing better instruction and strategies for executing better instruction, so definitely, go check out this book. When we talk about using research-based methods, I want to turn you on to this book called *Multimedia Learning* by Richard Mayer. Richard Mayer, he's a professor. He's been spending his career researching how to put together better multimedia learning product. A lot of them happen to deal specifically with presentations, and to be honest, the way we are creating presentations in higher education is horrid.

We are not helping learning at all and we can do a better job, and the strategies in this book will help you. In essence, this book is summed up in one phrase 'people learn better from words and pictures than from words alone'. If you have a slide that's got nothing but words and bullet points, you are not helping your students learn. You need to strip those words out and put more imagery and that will help them. There's a lot of science that goes in there. We are creating collisions on a verbal and visual channels that is hindering learning.

Great book. It's very academic. It really talks about the research behind it. There's another book called *Beyond Bullet Points* that really takes what he's done in this research and helps you create better PowerPoint presentations if you're going to use those to support your learning. Definitely an area where we can improve. The next book is called *Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day*. I think flipped instruction is a great strategy, the hybrid approach has come out in the research that it's a marrying of online plus in the classroom and taking the best of both worlds and getting an even better result.

Flip Your Classroom was written by Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams and they're the folks that really put this on the map. They were some chemistry instructors in high school and they basically asked a question, "What is the best for the students in my classroom?" They used this strategy that worked in and realized that each student was unique and they had to adjust her class to accommodate for the differences rather than push students through a class as if they were all the same. This helped them personalize the learning for each of their students while covering consistent content. Flipped instruction, definitely a fan.

All right. *Evidence-based Training Methods: A Guide for Training Professionals*. This is written by Ruth Colvin Clark and basically, she compiled all this research dealing with instruction that she worked through a lot of the myths and basically comes up with really strong instructional practices that she shares. She focuses on learning and elements of instruction, how do you create visuals and words that will support your instruction and provides lots of examples. If you're looking once again another book that talks about research-based instruction, this is a good one to have on your shelf.

I am a huge fan of gamification or gamifying my instruction, so one of the books that I really like is *The Multiplayer Classroom* written by Lee Sheldon. He shares his experience of gamifying his classroom. He was a game designer and he wondered if he could use game mechanics to positively improve classroom and he was successful and this book talks about this. He points out the lessons learned processes that he

explored and how we weave those mechanics in. Basically, he turned his class into a game, and I have used this in a number of my classes, and I'm definitely a fan. This is not about using games in the classroom, it's about turning your classroom into a game.

We have that next book, *From Telling to Teaching: A Dialogue Approach to Adult Learning.* Once again, this is talking about we do too much lecture. This is a strategy for developing interactive learning lessons and workshops. In the first part of the book, J. Norris provides clear explanations why the common method of instruction does not produce the best result and she explains why a dialog approach should be adopted. Section two is devoted to the actual design of a lesson or a workshop and she begins with instructional basics of needs, assessment, and objective development in order to build that workshop. Definitely, a book that I have found useful.

Last one in this teaching series is *Rapid Media Development for Trainers: Creating Videos, Podcasts, Presentations on a Budget*, written by Jonathan Hall who has 25 years of developing these type of artifacts for instruction. I had an opportunity to see him present at the Association for Talent Development Conference. That's why I picked up his book, but I also read his book, *Rapid Video Development for Trainers*, gives very straightforward checklist approach on how you should be building this content and things that you should consider. In this multimedia one, he talks not only about video but also audio files and imageries, you will build better products if you follow his instruction.

That's it on the teaching books, and so I'm moving on to the next category which happens to be Universal Design for Learning. Recently, I read two books that I want to share with you. Matter of fact, I did I believe podcasts on these two books and I'll put those into the show notes. This first book is called *UDL Now!: A Teacher's Guide to Applying Universal Design for Learning in Today's Classroom*. This was written by Dr. Katie Novak, lots of practical ideas on how to weave UDL into your classroom. It wasn't really geared for P-12 teachers, but I think higher education educators can definitely use it.

UDL is about creating or increasing access and inclusion, it's about providing options so students can better engage with your content. Two things that really jumped out at me were her examples one was talking about *The Biggest Loser*. If you're familiar with the show, these participants come on, they lose a lot of weight, and part of it is they're really being coached through the exercises, through monitoring their diet, but then they go out on their own and they struggle. Well, the same thing happens with teachers, that they'll come in and learn a new concept but then they'll go out on their own and they waver.

She talks about how to provide better support for those educators to keep them engaged and keep them on track. That was one of the things. When it came to talk about Universal Design for Learning and why we need to provide options and supports, one of the examples that really just resonated with me was the idea of holding a dinner party for a group of people, and you want everybody to come in and have a great time at your dinner, but everybody has different dietary needs and has

different preferences, so how can you make this happen where everyone will feel welcome and included.

I think that's the same thing that we need to be thinking about in terms of our class. Good book. *UDL Now,* I definitely recommend it. The other UDL book was Reach Everyone, *Teach Everyone: Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education.* This book was written by Thomas Tobin and Kirsten Behling. They shared a way for individual instructors to adopt UDL principles as well as a way to increase adoption across the campus. Some of the things that jump out on me in this book was they focus on mobile learners. If you've ever pulled out your mobile phone and you pulled up a document and you had to get on there with your fingers and stretch it and then move it side to side so you can read the document, the document was not created for mobile learners.

So, we've created an impediment to learning, so we need to make sure that our documents are mobile-ready and that will help increase access to those documents. They offered another set of strategies called the faculty four which is where you provide alternative text for anything that is not text like video or audio files, making sure that we are-- for images that you want that alternative text for images so a screen reader could help read those images, providing captions and transcripts for anything that's like a video or audio file, how we use formatting in our documents like headers and lists and those things.

Then finally when we have third party to make sure that those tools are accessible. They also address this idea of pinch points where when you have students asking a lot of questions, that is a great time to provide alternative ways of learning into your course as well as thinking about plus one which is if you have text, add a multimedia, if it's only multimedia, add text, so you're always having a plus one. Those are some books in the category of Universal Design that I recommend. For online learning, I recommend *Small Teaching Online: Applying Learning Science in Online Classes*.

This is a book by Flower Darby and James Lang, and this is definitely a book that I would love to put into every online teacher's hands. Just a wealth of wonderful information to help you build better online courses. A lot of the online courses that I have seen are nothing more than correspondence courses and they're lacking that human interaction. This book will help you get beyond that and tell you the things that you need to do to improve those courses. My next category is dealing with open education resources. The first book in that category is a guide to making open textbooks with students.

Both of these books, the first book and the other one I'm going to talk about are open books. With those books, actually I'm only talking about one. They're open education resources. I ended up purchasing them because I wanted to have something that I can scribble in and so I got those. This book was a fascinating book. I was interested in the book because in one of my classes I was having students create an open textbook on multimedia learning. Part of that book or part of the assignment is they had to go ahead and create chapters that were open.

This book provided a lot of guidance in that whole ecosystem on how to do it, where not only was I adopting and adapting OER content and even creating content but we got to the next level where my students were creating it. This just is a powerful way of looking at teaching and learning on how your students can contribute to that real world. Leaving the education book recommendations but I really want to dive into productivity because we have all these great ideas but how do we go ahead and implement these? This is where I think a lot of these books come into play.

The first one is called *Measure What Matters: How Google, Bono, and the Gates Foundation Rock the World with OKRs*. This book was written by John Doerr. John Doerr is the one that introduced OKRs, Objective and Key Results to Google and Google's done quite well with them. The idea of OKRs is taking those annual goals that we have and really focusing on them in a quarterly manner. What are the things that we can get done in this quarter and how can we measure it to make sure that we're on track. Basically, it provides a guidance on how to do that, how to break this all down. You're focusing on the things that are right so you are productive and not necessarily busy.

We have a lot of things that we do. We do busywork but we need to focus on doing the right thing and so the OKR has helped focus on that. I believe tied into this is the next book which is *The 80/20 Principle: The Secret to Achieving More with Less*. Have you ever heard of the economist Vilfredo Pareto? He discovered something peculiar about distribution. Distribution is not equal. It's a model that's closer to the 80/20. In this particular book, Richard Koch identified this principle and then he started examining it. The principle is really simple.

80% of the raw results come from 20% of effort. 80% of sales come from 20% of your products but it also 20% of the roads carry 80% of the traffic. That also means that 80% of the effort that we are displaying comes or yields 20% of the results. The idea is we can maximize that 20% to get the best 80% of the results or as we're looking at problems, what are the problems that are giving us 80% or 80% of the problems really are only a small handful of problems, 20%. It's really just looking at this whole world. I've gone out and pulled up a bunch of different data that I had and just started slicing and dicing and it was amazing how close it fit to this 80/20 principle.

This allows you to focus on the things that really matter and once you fix those, then you can move on to other things. This 80/20 principle I really like. *Free to Focus: A Total Productivity System to Achieve More by Doing Less*. Do you feel that no matter how hard you work, you're not making any progress? There are specific periods in my life, certainly that I've felt this way and it's one of the reasons I'm so interested in productivity books and podcasts. I want to learn how to hack the system. I may not necessarily be getting it entirely right.

This particular book, *Free to Focus*, was written by Michael Hyatt who has been quite successful, but we shouldn't be working on the idea of productivity simply to get more time so we can do more. It really goes back to that we should be doing the right things again and so we can free our time so we can think about other things rather than just fill that time in. That we're working for, you know basically some freedom that allows

us to regenerate and get back into the groove. That's a reason that I've put this on the list that we need to be becoming more productive for a certain reason and that reason is a little surprising.

The next one on my list dealing with productivity is *The 12 Week Year: Get More Done in 12 Weeks than Others Do in 12 Months*. This really ties back to this idea of OKRs that we typically set annual goals and we wait about 10 months until we realized that we got a report out on our goals and then we started focusing on our goals. Therefore, we don't really get the things done that we need to do to make our life better and to raise the level of our work or our volunteer life or our personal life. This book by Brian Morgan and Michael Lennington talks about this idea of goal setting but really breaking it down into those 12 weeks or measure what matters these OKRs.

They talk about how to create this 12-week plan and ways that you can keep your eye on the ball and develop tactics and weekly plans so you can really keep that in front of you and actually get some things done. This next book called *Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time* by Jeff Sutherland takes this even another step. The scrum methodology for project or program planning or program execution really breaks this down into two weeks where you're focused on that two-week period. You take those large goals that you're putting in quarterly basis and then looking at every two weeks as a work cycle on what can you get done to get closer to getting those goals done.

These two-week work cycles are called sprint. At work, we're tracking them in Asana and I've been really happy on the progress that we're making because we're doing those things. Then the other one dealing with productivity that I want to share is *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. This is really homing in on the things that are absolutely essential but also communicating why these particular things are essential. A lot of the books that I had talked about earlier, like *Teaching Naked Techniques*, the first chapter focus on why.

Why are you doing this? Why are you doing this particular activity? Being able to communicate that to your students so they will then buy into the how and what. The same thing with instructional technologies, instead of saying, "Hey, just do this," explaining why this is a better approach helps get that buy-in. That just smooths the tracks as you're moving forward. A lot of things that I'm doing is I'm really reframing them as to why am I doing these things as a way to improve the service I'm providing others and talking about those things.

The next set of books really ties into this concept of working out loud. The first book is *Never Lose a Customer Again: Turn Any Sale Into Lifelong Loyalty in 100 Days*. You probably think it's like, "We're not really into the sales business." No, but what kind of grabbed me about this is I had an opportunity to watch Joey Coleman speak who wrote the book at social media marketing world. He was talking about how in the first 100 days we are losing so many companies or so many customers and what we could do in the first 100 days to prevent this loss and so that's why I got this book.

This, although it's designed for the business world, also applies to higher education that we have students coming in and they're excited about school and they get into school and a lot of them leave after the first semester, or we have folks dropping our classes right away. There's a lot of strategies and tactics in this book that could basically help stem that tide to our exit doors, that we can keep those students into our classes. Once we get past that 100 days, the odds are that they're going to hang out for the rest of their education career. If we lose them in that 100 days, then we're probably not getting him back anytime soon.

A lot of strategies and they're really simple strategies. They're not very hard. Some of it is just better communication and so all these things fit in together. Last book that I want to recommend as part of this series is *They Ask You Answer: A Revolutionary Approach to Inbound Sales, Content Marketing, and Today's Digital Consumer*. Once again, you're just like, "Why am I explaining a business book?" What I have found out is by working out loud, this concept of working out loud, which I talked about earlier, you are sharing content with individuals that have questions.

This can be applied in any classroom that students have these questions all the time. Take time to answer those questions, put it down in a video, put it down in text, create some images, but put it down. This book was written by Marcus Sheridan, another individual I had an opportunity to talk about it. His business in 2008 was loose. He lost a quarter-million dollars in a weekend and he and his partners started answering questions for their blog and being very honest and straightforward and they were able to save their business. It actually put them on the map where if you look for that particular product or industry, they're the ones that show up and what we could do the same thing in our classrooms.

This is about building supports for your students using these strategies. That's my list. I will put them all in the show notes and I encourage you to take a look at them. I think it wil-- I think you'll find them enlightening. The other thing I want to plug, at the beginning I mentioned that I have these goals. I share my goals on Goodreads. I will put a link to Goodreads, come follow me and after I finish reading a book, I usually review it and I put my review on Goodreads and you could see what I'm sharing there. Each month on my blog, I share, what I'm reading for that particular month, and later you can find the blog posts that are attached to that.

Come join me on Goodreads, and we can recommend books to each other. I would love to do that. Speaking of books, here's a plug for my book.