

Foreword

Pat Wolfe

It was in the early 1990s that I became interested in the applications of neuroscience (brain research) to educational practice. After all, since teachers are teaching brains, doesn't it make sense to understand as much as possible about how they learn? Perhaps we would find some answers to the most vexing problems teacher face, such as why some children have difficulty learning to read or how to get students to pay attention in class. As I began to read and talk to neuroscientists, I also began to incorporate what I was learning into my workshops and seminars. These workshops on the applications of brain research to educational practice found an enthusiastic audience of educators at every level from preschool through the university. Educators were fascinated with the research and the implications for their classrooms. I was not the only educator working in this new field; Renate and Jeff Caine, Eric Jensen, David Sousa, and Bob Sylwester also shared interest in this new field.

The popularity of the workshops began to present a problem; none of us had the time to honor all the requests. To meet the need of more presenters, I developed a training-of-trainers program. I selected educators (teachers, administrators, staff developers, school psychologists) who were considered tops in their field and offered to train them to conduct workshops and seminars in their own schools and districts.

Over the past 15 years, nearly 500 educators have taken advantage of these training-of-trainers sessions. Among the first to attend was an excellent teacher named Margaret Glick. She was a natural, very successful teacher, and she immediately began

incorporating the research and brain-compatible strategies in her own classroom. When she moved into administration as a coach, principal, and superintendent, she carried her expertise with her and expanded the applications of the research to curriculum, assessment, and leadership. Later, the university classes she taught on brain development and cognition were favorites of new and experienced teachers.

Many years ago, Dr. Bruce Joyce developed a classification of teachers related to their staff development experiences. At the highest level he described the “omnivores,” those who not only sought out professional development workshops and seminars but immediately incorporated what they learned into their work. Glick certainly fits this category, having participated in a wide range of training in coaching, differentiated instruction, working with students of poverty, assessment, guided language acquisition, standards, math, and thinking maps, among others.

Perhaps the most important contribution Glick makes is the rationale for why leaders of schools need to understand current findings from neuroscience. This book provides a framework for instructional leaders to use the ideas and research on the brain in their unique roles as evaluators, communicators, and professional developers.

Glick’s wide range of successful experience at all levels of education has served her well. She practices what she preaches. The book draws on the elements of effective brain-compatible instruction and clear, precise presentation of the research; opportunities to practice recall; and strategies for application of the research at the leadership level.

Anyone in a leadership capacity will benefit from the information provided in this book. Here is an opportunity to understand and engage in the brain-compatible activities of a true instructional leader.