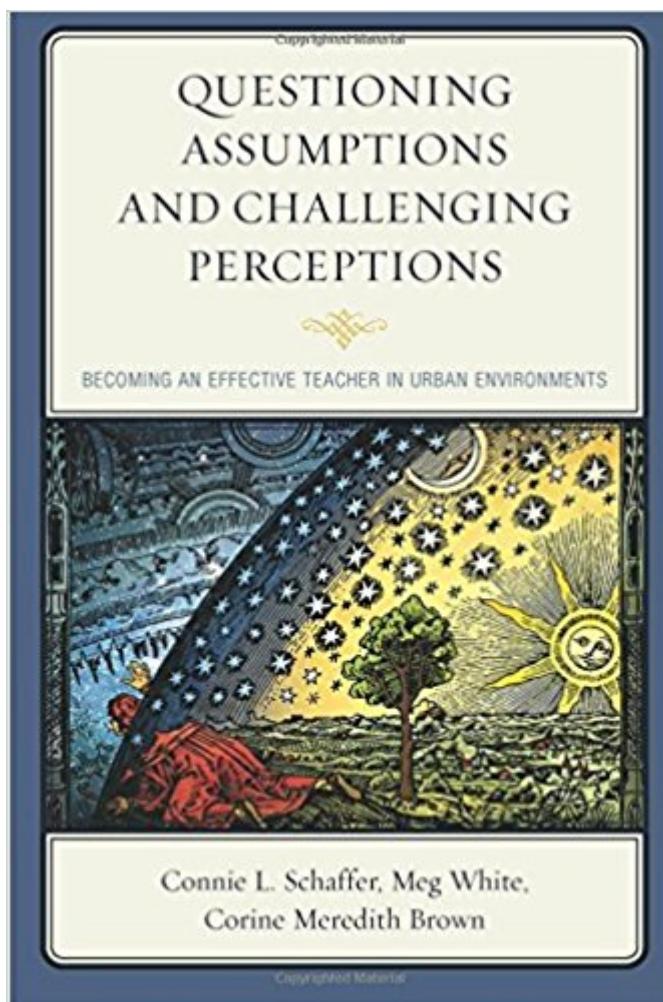


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Questioning Assumptions And Challenging Perceptions: Becoming An Effective Teacher In Urban Environments



Connie L. Schaffer, Meg White,
Corine Meredith Brown



Synopsis

For a moment, consider “you don’t know what you don’t know.” What individuals know about urban schools is often based on assumptions and perceptions. It is important for individuals to examine these assumptions and perceptions of urban schools and the students who attend them. While many textbooks support how teachers should teach students in urban settings, this book asserts individuals can be effective teachers in these settings only if they first develop an understanding urban schools and the students who attend them. As readers progress through the chapters, they will realize they don’t know what they don’t know. Within a framework of cognitive dissonance, readers will continuously examine and reexamine their personal beliefs and perceptions. Readers will also investigate new information and varied perspectives related to urban schools. When readers finish this book, they will be on their way to becoming effective teachers in urban environments.

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Customer Reviews

That teachers need to understand themselves—their talents as well as their shortcomings, their sensitivities as well as their biases—before they can be effective with students of all backgrounds is by now fairly well accepted. In *Questioning Assumptions and Changing Perceptions*, authors Connie Schaffer, Meg White, and Corine Meredith Brown go beyond platitudes to explore not only why but also how teachers and other educators can do so. This book will be useful for novice as well as veteran teachers who want to make a difference for themselves and their

students. (Sonia Nieto, Sonia Nieto, Professor Emerita, Language, Literacy, and Culture, College of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst) Building on an urban ecological framework, this book powerfully shepherds pre-service and in-service teachers into processes of reflection on unexamined assumptions that can lead to practices detrimental for youth. Educators interested in learning more about how their beliefs and mindsets shape their practice should read this book. The authors remind educators that they must be audaciously deliberate in their efforts to learn and develop as they work to support their students in urban environments who deserve our best every day! This is an important book! (H. Richard Milner IV, author of *Rac(e)ing to Class, Confronting poverty and race in schools and classrooms*)

Connie Schaffer is a faculty member at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Her teaching and research focus on preparing pre-service teachers to better understand the context of urban schools and the students who attend them. Meg White is an Assistant Professor in Teacher Education at Stockton University. Currently much of her teaching and scholarship is preparing pre-service teachers to be effective urban educators. Corine Meredith Brown is Assistant Chair for the Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education Department at Rowan University. Her teaching and research focus on pre-service teacher preparation in diverse learning environments.

Questioning Assumptions and Challenging Perceptions is a significant book because it helps educators to transcend the mindsets of themselves as well as their students. As an educator for over 25 years, I have found that educators should attempt to understand their students beyond the realm of school by becoming cognizant of their familial, cultural, and linguistic mores and differences. The premise of the book encourages introspection and inquiry which can increase educators' confidence to broach sensitive topics relative to teaching in an urban environment. The authors have crafted essential questions and experiential exercises that can prompt crucial dialogues about mindfulness, stereotypes, and cross-cultural dynamics. These can inspire educators and students to foster positive relationships in any urban educational setting. The title, Questioning Assumptions and Challenging Perceptions, is indicative of something that educators should readily strive to consider about their respective perception of self, students, teaching environments, and surrounding school communities to heighten awareness of urban school dynamics. My goal is to incorporate this book into my work to educate pre-service teachers about diversity and also to use it as a resource for my cross-cultural interventionist and interculturalist endeavors.

As an individual working in an urban school setting as an early intervention specialist, this book resonated with me not only professionally, but personally as well. On a professional level, the authors encourage the reader to adopt an approach to teaching that has been essential to my work for more than 15 years: to think systemically. The authors contend that in order to be an effective teacher, one must adopt an understanding of the student in a broader context: the family, the social, and physical environment. Through this process, not only will the student's challenges be identified, but more importantly, their unique STRENGTHS. Through a well conceived, clearly outlined process of presenting an essential question, followed by an experiential exercise, the authors encourage the reader to be self-aware, reflective, and open-minded in their approach to teaching in an urban environment. While these are characteristics that support professional development and will lead to a more effective teacher, they are also qualities that, in my opinion, will inspire the individual to be a more thoughtful, empathic, and critically thinking citizen. Questioning Assumptions and Challenging Perceptions is essential reading that should be included in every undergraduate and graduate level education program.

A great read for anyone that really wants to study the real life scenario of teaching in today's urban area. Super book selection for pre-service teachers.

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