

Review: *about Becoming A Teacher* by William Ayers

(Teachers College Press, 2019, 85 pp.)

Chad Dall, Bellin College, chad.dall@bellincollege.edu

about *Becoming A Teacher* is one of several books by William Ayers on the subject of developing teachers. It is one of two books thus far in the *School: Questions* series that also includes *about Gender Identity Justice in Schools and Communities* by sj Miller. Ayers is a retired college professor and an editor for the *Teaching in Social Justice* series for Teachers College Press. This book is centered around answering teaching's deepest questions and guiding future teachers and experienced teachers alike. Ten fundamental questions are addressed and expanded upon from the viewpoint of a lifelong educational advocate. I came to review this book because I never saw myself as an educator before taking on my first classroom of students. I wondered if I could find the answer in this book as to why I find myself in love with a career that was never on my radar.

Ayers's book comes from the viewpoint of an educational activist and may be seen by some as too "socially left" as they read the subject matter. I did not find any issues with the ideological approach the book presented, but rather embraced the mindset presented as I find careers in the public service arena should have a "humanist" viewpoint. He walks the reader through the questions asked by all teachers as they enter the realm of teaching. The overall intent of the book is to answer these important questions and lead the reader towards self-reflection and self-realization on the matter of teaching as a selfless career.

about *Becoming A Teacher* takes the reader through the formational questions like “Should I become a teacher” or “How do I work with parents”? Each of the ten foundational questions is addressed one by one as the book works on breaking those broad questions into biteable chunks of information. There is a natural flow created by the line of questioning that seems to fit with the development of a new teacher. While some of the explanations come from a more socially ideological approach, it does allow the reader to explore themselves in the process. The book allows the reader to play an active role in becoming a teacher and not a passive learner. He directs the reader to “learn how to observe and record the behaviors, performances, and actions of students” (p. 16) as a method in creating an environment of learning.

Ayers tells the reader to remember that “education is bold, adventurous, creative, vivid, and illuminating” (p. 41). He uses this statement as an inspirational call to arms against the current practice of curriculum development that does not involve teachers and is used to instill control and hierarchy. He asks teachers to “create classrooms where students can learn from one another even as they are learning to live with one another” (p. 65) as a way to allow for horizontal teaching along side vertical teaching methods. Ayers fosters the personal growth of the reader as a method of improving the teaching profession and its purpose in society.

Overall, Ayers answers the core questions all teachers have as they start teaching and continue to have throughout their careers. He answers these questions with examples, rational, and self-reflection direction. *about Becoming A Teacher* is a great guide for educators looking to the answers to questions that cause one anxiety but are rarely answered in the training of new teachers. I found this book very helpful in allowing myself to step back and rediscover the reason behind teaching others. This book is not written as the end-all guide to teaching but rather a tool to help one discover themselves and their own path to success as a teacher. Teaching requires a passion inside, and this book helps educators find their reason for becoming a teacher.