

Reviewed by Jessica Koehler
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In *Helping Educators Grow*, Drago-Severson reflects on twenty years of experience as a teacher and educational researcher. Her work is grounded in Kegan’s constructive-developmental theory and provides a warm, candid, and transparent perspective on educational leadership development. Her approach emphasizes self-growth and reflection and the book speaks to a number of audiences including individuals to groups in a variety of educational settings including schools, school districts, and university-based leadership.

Helping Educators Grow begins by introducing a diagrammatic representation of one’s development as a leader in the form of concentric circles. The most central of which represents the inner-awareness vital to effective leadership; the outermost is the ultimate implementation of leadership, and the intermediate circles connect and translate the individualized intrapersonal with the final interpersonal manifestation. The following six chapters of Helping Educators Grow provide continuity by repeatedly referring back to and expounding upon this model presented in the Introduction.

Throughout the book, Drago-Severson models the candid transparency that she argues is a necessary component to development as a leader and in light of constructive-developmental theory. She states:

My theory, point of view, and approach to creating professional learning opportunities that nurture leadership development and the growth of internal capacity are heavily and importantly influenced by constructive-developmental theory. For me, it is not just a lens I use when working with practicing and aspiring leaders; rather it is a part of how I see – how I understand myself, the people around me, and the world. It is my basic theory of life and living I all domains of my personal, professional, and private life.(64)

To add richness to the content of each chapter, the author openly discusses the focal topic in the context of her own personal and professional experiences. These experiences elucidate why she espouses such a unique approach to leadership development - one that fearlessly acknowledges the vulnerability and humanity within even the strongest of leaders.

As the full title attests, Helping Educators Grow: Strategies and Practices for Leadership Development, Drago-Severson has produced a text that not only presents theory but that offers strategies and practices for the reader. Though the actual content is much more engaging, palatable, and short-winded than a typical textbook, it is structured to be equally useful. In addition to discussing leadership development theory, throughout the book she has incorporated real-world vignettes that clearly illustrate how such theory manifests in reality. Key points are also
summarized in several well-organized tables that can be quickly referenced. Perhaps most useful are the takeaway summaries, reflective questions, and application exercises at the end of most chapters. All of these components add a wonderfully pragmatic dimension to an already inspiring read.

*Helping Educators Grow* is a wonderfully unique combination of a well informed and welcoming read with an extremely practical dimension. It is not a book to simply read but to return to again and again as an interactive guide and enduring resource.

**About the Reviewer**

Jessica Koehler is a doctoral student in Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education division of the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education. Prior to her doctoral studies, she earned a BA degree in Biochemistry from The Colorado College, an MS in chemistry at the University of Louisville, and taught secondary and post-secondary science for nearly a decade in schools throughout the United States and abroad. She is currently a research assistant on the ITEST-Nano and DRK12-Biograph projects, which involve bringing real world science, cognitively rich pedagogy, and educational technologies into science classrooms. Her future doctoral research will explore the interdependence of the affective domain of school communities (teacher-student relationships particularly), with national curriculum standards, and student academic achievement and motivation.
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