

Oakley, B., Ragowsky, B., & Sejnowski, T. J. (2021).
Uncommon sense teaching: Practical insights in brain science to help students learn.
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Introduction

The science of learning is fascinating, ever-increasing, and wholly misunderstood by educators. In 2002, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) promoted the use of neuroscience research within pedagogical practice but cautioned the educational community against “neuromyths” (incorrect assumptions of how the human brain learns, often based on misinterpretations of neuroscience and cognitive psychology). Since 2002, increasing evidence suggests that K-12 teachers around the world believe in and use neuromyths in their teaching, including Blanchette Sarrasin et al.’s 2019 survey of Canadian teachers. As Educational Leaders, administrators, and policymakers consider how to best prepare students for an ever-changing workforce, there has been a shift from focusing solely on what students learn to a focus on how students learn to foster a new generation of lifelong learners.

There have been numerous attempts by researchers and academics over the last decades to enhance pedagogy with neuroscience, yet there has been little traction within public education in North America (Dekker et al., 2012; Weinstein, 2018). As stated in *Powerful Teaching*, “The science of learning sits dormant in academic journals, rather than easily accessible in pre-service textbooks and professional development materials” (Agarwal & Bain, 2019, p. 3). Part of the difficulty of incorporating neuroscience within everyday classrooms is that primary research can be inaccessible or incomprehensible to the average educator, and when research does eventually reach educators, it is often out of date and mistranslated by the mainstream media (Tunison, 2020; Williams, 2020).

If anyone can bridge academia and classroom pedagogy, Barbara Oakley, Beth Rogowsky, and Terrence Sejnowski are the trio to succeed. Oakley, an award-winning professor and a best-selling author, and Sejnowski, a neuroscientist, have demonstrated remarkable traction in bridging the academia of learning science within the public sector with their Coursera course, *Learning How to Learn*; sharing evidence-based learning techniques for learners of all ages, across all disciplines. Joining forces with Beth Ragowsky, a former K-12 educator with a neuroscience background, these three create the perfect match of academic rigor and the practicality of a real-world classroom. *Uncommon Sense Teaching: Practical Insights in Brain Science to Help Students Learn* is one of the most easily accessible and academically rigorous texts available to educators and should be required reading for both teachers and learners.

Summary

Uncommon Sense Teaching is written for the K-12 classroom teacher and, while there are some references to postsecondary instructors and parents, this book could function as a teacher user manual that offers “slight but powerful tweaks” to integrate the science of learning in the classroom (Oakley et al., 2021, p. xi). Chapter 1 begins with an all too familiar situation: a student who diligently completes homework and studies hard but performs poorly. Using this common tale, Oakley et al. show the importance of under-