



A Democratic Classroom

Steven Wolk

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A Democratic Classroom is Steven Wolk's vision of a classroom that nurtures meaningful literacy and democracy. Like John Dewey, Wolk believes that democracy is a way of life that embraces the ideals of community, empathy, the common good, responsibility, freedom, equality, thoughtfulness, and critical consciousness. This is his story of how he helps his students learn democracy by living democracy - how he encourages meaningful learning across the content areas and empowers children to think for themselves.

Wolk examines the idea of a classroom as a community: what community means; what community demands of its space, inhabitants, and curriculums; and the richness of learning in a social setting with much discussion. The author offers no panaceas because creating a classroom that is a purposeful community has been a struggle for Wolk himself. He confronts the issues of freedom, control, and "discipline" in the classroom, knowing well the difficulties and complexities that democratic schooling can create.

One of the greatest strengths of the book is how Wolk shows what it means to be a critically reflective teacher who views himself as much a learner, researcher, and educational activist as he does a facilitator and curriculum creator. In his call to reinvent teaching, Wolk argues for teachers who ask questions, challenge assumptions, respect children, and understand the enormous role they play in shaping minds and society. *A Democratic Classroom* combines theory with practice, offering multiple examples of integrative projects and classroom experiences.

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