

A Podcast in My Pocket: The Cult of Pedagogy

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Summary: This article is a review of the Cult of Pedagogy, a website that provides instructional tools and classroom topics, and a place for continued professional development. This article mostly discusses the podcast section.

Keywords: pedagogical skills, podcast, professional development, website

After having plugged into the ingenuity of other WAESOL writers, my time has come to share. My recent inspirations have been [Prioritizing Synchronous Class Time with Loom](#) by Margaret Diehl (Diehl, 2021) and [Language Learning Reimagined](#) by Amy Reed (Reed, 2021). From Diehl's article, I learned how to use the video messaging and screencasting tool, [Loom](#), and I went on to use Loom to teach different notetaking skills while listening to lectures. From Reed's article, I learned about project-based learning and I also was able to follow hyperlinks within her article that led me into a mystical world where teachers' lives are being transformed by the [Cult of Pedagogy](#) website (Gonzalez, 2021).

Jennifer Gonzalez (2021) is the website curator of the Cult of Pedagogy. Gonzalez is a visionary who knows the teaching world intimately. She has taught middle school,

pre-service teaching courses at a university, and she is a mother. Unfortunately, while teaching she felt isolated in professional environments. As a result of this, Gonzalez decided to create a website that offered a space where dialogue and discussion occur about relevant hot topics in the teaching field, including educational reform, assessment tips, technology tools, equity episodes, classroom management tricks, and lessons about emotional and social intelligence. It is a mosaic of expertise, wisdom, inquisition, research, and exploration into pedagogical elements provided in interviews from educators, students, administrators, and/or parents (Gonzalez, 2021). Additionally, each podcast has a written transcript that you can access to use as a resource. The website offers an abundance of information organized into clear sections: a blog, a video section, a podcast section, and more (see Figure 1).

Due to the pandemic and an entire year of teaching online, I craved offline activities but still wanted to be engaged as a teacher. This craving pulled me toward the Cult of Pedagogy's podcast section. Currently, there are 181 different episodes, and more are being added. In the mornings, usually after I finished teaching two long Zoom classes, I would venture outside to walk my dogs at a nearby park, playing a podcast or two as I enjoyed some fresh air. Feeling that I had missed out on previous years and needed to catch up, I devoured all I could. This podcast in my pocket was refreshing, revitalizing, and reconnected me to new ideas in teaching. No more screen time, please (see Figure 2).



Figure 1: Cult of Pedagogy Homepage

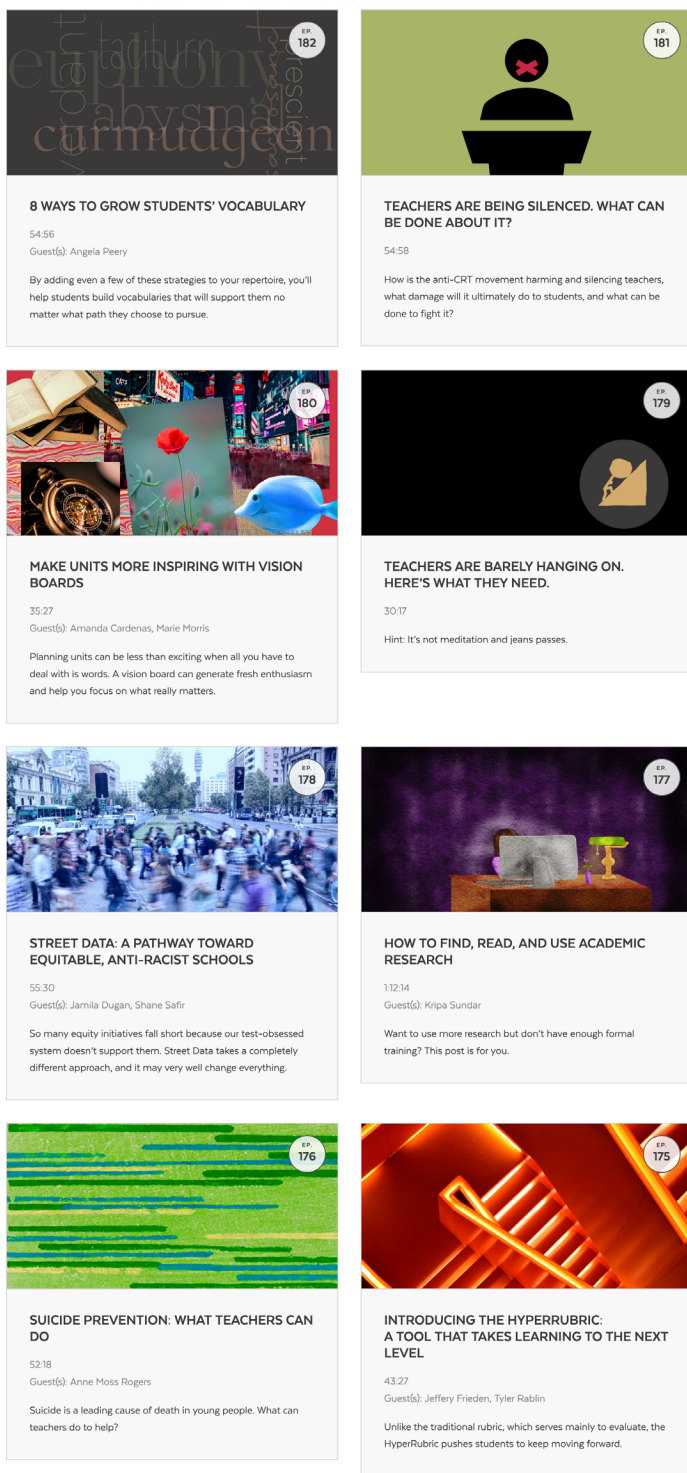


Figure 2: Examples of podcasts from the Cult of Pedagogy website

One podcast that led specifically to new strategies in my classes is called [Up-Down-Both-Why: A feeling based approach](#) by Sarah Levine. Levine (2021) presented a literary tool to help students connect to reading. Levine explained that before students can grasp deeper literary interpretations of a text, they need to learn how to interact with text at a basic level using the Up-Down-Both-Why (UDBW) chart. Levine explains the UDBW chart:

Formally, this strategy is called affective evaluation, but teachers and students have come to call it

“up-down-both-why” because in practice, people often draw up and down arrows or make “thumbs up” and “thumbs down” gestures to communicate their evaluations. They also sometimes use the words “up” and “down” as shorthand for “positive” and “negative.” Hence, “up-down-both-why,” or UDBW. (Levine, 2021, para 6).

The chart helps to evoke an emotional response from the students, eliciting their personal view of a text as either positive or negative. The UDBW chart can also be used to review the authorial view of the text, adding another level of critical thought. A teacher can also ask the students to reflect on the text by finding both negative and positive nuances.

For my basic intermediate adult ESL class, I decided to use it in my weekly independent reading assignments on Canvas to see if it would evoke deeper reflection and interpretation of our texts. To my amazement, it did. I think the visualization and simplicity of the chart allowed my students to express themselves more freely towards the text. One of my reading assignments was *The Thief and the Innkeeper* from Aesop’s Fables. The students explained their reactions to this text with some of the following statements:

Student 1: “Negative because he tried to steal and that is not right although he gave a lot of laugh when he tells the story he made him like a wolf.”

Student 2: “The story is negative and terrible because the thief has no money and he needs money. He tricked the innkeeper.”

Student 3: “The story was more negative because I don’t like the wolf and the tricking.”

It seems to be that the chart helped to generate better reflection answers. Before, my students would reflect on their reading with a short answer explaining only that the reading was good or bad without any explanation.

Additionally, in her podcast Levine (2021) explains other adaptations in using the chart. For instance, a teacher could focus on a theme of a text and ask for analysis of it on a continuum. Is the text optimistic or pessimistic and what other words between optimistic or pessimistic might describe the text? This is a more advanced analysis but

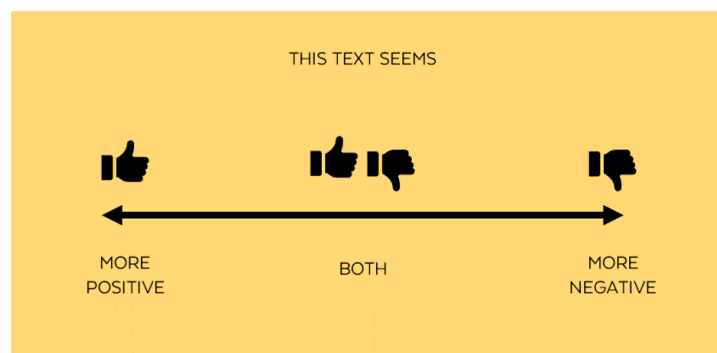


Figure 3: Up-Down-Both-Why (UDBW) Chart

allows students to identify words in between optimistic or pessimistic. The podcast provided a starting place for me to research the UDBW chart and how affective evaluation in reading is an integral part of finding meaningful interactions during reading activities.

Beyond the UDBW podcast episode, I listened to several other podcasts. A few more striking ones I recommend are

- [6 ED Teach Tools to Try in 2021](#),
- [How to Spot Dyslexia, and What to Do Next](#),
- [Making School A Safe Place for LGBTQ Students](#),
- [How to Set up Mastery-Based Grading in Your Classroom](#), and

- [Teachers Are Being Silenced. What Can Be Done About It?](#)

These podcasts are necessary and relevant. They provide teaching tips and insights that support teachers' exploration, research, and well-being. It is an outstanding resource that can be used repeatedly. It has been revolutionary to connect to so much wisdom in a podcast in my pocket. It made me less lonely, and made me a bit nerdier, hipper, and trendier as a teacher. This led me to think about my instruction in new and creative ways. During the first waves of the pandemic, it was a lifeline, and I can only imagine that Cult of Pedagogy will go on inspiring me as I continue navigating my teaching career.

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