## What the Best Law Teachers Do

By Michael Hunter Schwartz, Gerald F. Hess & Sophie M. Sparrow. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press (2013), 355 pages, ISBN: 9780674049147.

Excellent learning in law school is the product of excellent teaching – but what is excellent teaching, and how do you know when you've seen it? The authors of this work, experienced law teachers and writers on the topic of legal pedagogy, conducted a four-year study of law school teaching. They present their findings mostly in the words and attitudes of twenty-six excellent teachers from a variety of law schools on how the teachers approach their work in the classroom.

But *What the Best Law Teachers Do* is not a how-to book. Its title is quite literal in that the reader is ushered in behind the scenes to watch their peers prepare and perform. With its conversational, non-didactic tone, the book inspires as it informs, and the voices of the selected teachers ring clearly, as do those of the students who were surveyed for the study. (Indeed, the student perspectives can be more revealing in places.)

Particularly relevant chapters relate diverse perspectives on preparation for class, engaging students in and out of the classroom, and on assessing students and providing useful feedback. And while the teachers whose words fill the book are overwhelmingly doctrinal law professors, at least one specializes in legal research and writing. Particularly interesting are discussions of hypotheticals that do or don't work and sections on how to teach law students to read legal materials effectively. But the book's success is in its holistic, synthetic approach – readers can jump in and out of the subject matter yet still place themselves within the conversation easily. It makes an excellent companion to the more instructional books on this topic, and allows us to see a bit of ourselves in the teachers we may hope to emulate.

Reviewed by Aaron S. Kirschenfeld, Reference & Digital Initiatives Law Librarian, UNC School of Law, in 2016.