



THE MAIN IDEA

current education books

6 Thought-provoking TED Talks for EDUCATORS

Suggestions from The Main Idea

Consider using a TED Talk for a beginning or end-of-year staff meeting

We all know the value of taking some time at the beginning and the end of the year to reflect. Consider showing your staff a TED Talk as a jumping-off point to inspire, reflect, or plan (and of course laugh!)

Perhaps you have some TED Talks that have inspired you, but below are a few suggestions of TED Talks that speak to educators. The next pages contain a short blurb about each TED Talk along with discussion questions to use with staff.

6 TED Talks for Educators

1. Every kid needs a champion. By Rita F. Pierson
https://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion (8 minutes)
2. The key to success? Grit. By Angela Lee Duckworth
https://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion (8 minutes)
3. The happy secret to better work. By Shawn Achor
https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work#t-717237 (12 minutes)
4. How schools kill creativity. By Sir Ken Robinson
https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity (19 minutes)
5. The subtle power of everyday leadership. By Drew Dudley
https://www.ted.com/talks/drew_dudley_everyday_leadership (6 minutes)
6. Our failing schools. Enough is enough! By Geoffrey Canada
https://www.ted.com/talks/geoffrey_canada_our_failing_schools_enough_is_enough (17 minutes)

1. Every kid needs a champion. By Rita F. Pierson

https://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion (8 minutes)

Overview: As a teacher for over 40 years, Pierson talks about a key ingredient in teaching -- the power of building relationships with students. She's funny, it's brief, and it's an inspirational way to start or end the year. This will make teachers feel good that they are teachers.

Questions to Discuss

- 1) Discuss the James Comer quote, "No significant learning can occur without a significant relationship" along with her line, "You know, kids don't learn from people they don't like," and the fact that her mother, when she died, "Left a legacy of relationships."
- 2) In what ways have you left a "legacy of relationships" this year?
- 3) What is one concrete thing you can do at the beginning of the next school year to foster relationships and a connection with your students? What about colleagues?

2. The key to success? Grit. By Angela Lee Duckworth

https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit#t-286995 (6 minutes)

Overview: This is an important piece of the educational puzzle. Researcher Angela Lee Duckworth studied what accounts for student success in schools. And guess what? It's not IQ; it's due to something she calls "grit" -- a combination of perseverance, working hard, and passion for your goals. While so many of our students need to reach newer, higher standards, it's heartening to know that research points to hard work, rather than IQ, as a means for getting them there!

Questions to Discuss

- 1) Can we define grit for our school? What does it mean and what might it look like in the classroom?
- 2) Duckworth said that the best idea she has heard for building grit in kids has to do with the *growth mindset* from Carol Dweck. Dweck writes that a *growth mindset* is when you believe that through your own efforts you can improve your qualities (in comparison to a *fixed mindset* in which you believe that your qualities -- such as intelligence and academic achievement -- are set in stone). Discuss how grit and the growth mindset are related. (See The Main Idea's book summary of Dweck's book online.)
- 3) Brainstorm some concrete ways to build grit in the classroom.

3. The happy secret to better work. By Shawn Achor

https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work#t-717237 (12 minutes)

Overview: Achor argues that we have the notion of success (in school, at work, in life) all backwards. We think if we work hard *then* we will be happy later. But research points to the opposite. He argues that if we train the brain to focus on the positive *now*, our brains actually work *better* when they are positive than when they are stressed. Plus he shares 5 concrete tactics we can use to start training our brains for success starting tomorrow.

This is a good talk for overworked teachers and leaders and also for overachieving, burnt-out students. Really it's a great talk for everyone -- who doesn't want to be more positive *and* successful at the same time?! Plus, this made me laugh out loud. I felt my brain flooding with dopamine just listening to him...

Questions to Discuss

1. How did this talk affect your thinking about your own work and personal life?
2. What implications does this have for our staff and students? Is there anything we can do differently in our school or classrooms?
3. Consider taking the 21-day "train your brain" challenge. As a leader along with your faculty, or as a teacher along with your students, can you spend 21 consecutive days: (1) writing 3 gratitudes, (2) journaling about one positive experience, (3) exercising, (4) meditating, and (5) doing one act of kindness? Or at least *some* of these?

4. How schools kill creativity. By Sir Ken Robinson

https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity (19 minutes)

Overview: This is a classic, highly entertaining talk seen by over 26 million people (yes, you've probably already seen it), by Sir Ken Robinson – who is hysterical (and not just because of his British accent). Robinson talks about the problem of schools killing creativity by being so narrowly focused. Instead, schools need to understand that intelligence is much broader than being good at math. An enjoyable and entertaining talk that will also get your teachers thinking about fostering creativity in their own classrooms and teaching to diverse learners. It's impossible to watch this and not laugh!

Questions to Discuss

1. Think about how Ken Robinson defines *creativity* -- “the process of having original ideas that have value.” What might this mean for your discipline or the grade you teach?
2. Do you agree that schools are “killing creativity”? In what ways is this true and in what ways do you dispute this notion.
3. What's one thing you could do differently next year to allow your students to explore original ideas in your classroom?
4. What could we be doing differently in our classes so we tap into the “richness of human capacity” as Robinson says, and educate the whole child?

5. The subtle power of everyday leadership. By Drew Dudley

https://www.ted.com/talks/drew_dudley_everyday_leadership (6 minutes)

Overview: Dudley talks about how even some of our smallest acts have the power to impact others beyond what we can imagine. This is a short talk you can use to inspire teachers to think of themselves as leaders and reflect on a moment this school year when they impacted a student's life. Or use it as an opportunity for staff members to reflect on a time when another staff member impacted their lives.

Questions to Discuss

- 1) Drew Dudley said, “If you change one person's understanding of it [the world], one person's understanding of what they're capable of, one person's understanding of how much people care about them, one person's understanding of how powerful an agent for change they can be in this world, you've changed the whole thing.” Ask teachers to share one story of how they believe they impacted one student's life *or* how someone on staff impacted their own lives.
- 2) Discuss how, based on Dudley's view of leadership, you see yourself as a leader in the classroom.
- 3) Have you ever had a “lollypop” moment when someone – particularly a teacher – said or did something that changed your life? If so, share this experience with the group now and then Google that person tonight to thank him or her.

6. Our failing schools. Enough is enough! By Geoffrey Canada

https://www.ted.com/talks/geoffrey_canada_our_failing_schools_enough_is_enough (17 minutes)

Overview: In this TED Talk, the famous head of the Harlem Children's Zone encourages educators to innovate, even if they fail. He bemoans the fact that schools look the same as they did 50 years ago when we are clearly not succeeding with this model. Show this to leaders or a leadership team, particularly in an inner-city school.

Questions to Discuss

- 1) Canada talks about some of the out-of-date practices of schools – like taking two months off in the summer even though research shows that kids lose ground when this happens. Can you think of other out-of-date practices in your school or school system that we continue just because we've always done things that way?
- 2) Canada says, “The fact that you have failure shouldn't stop you.” In what ways do you support your staff when they fail or even encourage them to take risks? What concrete steps could you take to more actively create a culture in which innovation, failure, and looking at the results of these endeavors is the norm?